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as a

Second Language

Elementary

Guide to Implementation

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FOREWORD

This document draws from the collective expertise of English as a Second Language (ESL) specialists and classroom teachers, and from classroom-based research in the fields of first and second language acquisition. It has been written to help teachers effectively accommodate students with ESL needs in elementary classrooms. Its purpose is to:

- provide teachers with a clear understanding of who the ESL student is as well as basic information about second language learning
- reinforce the principle that ESL students learn best in an age-appropriate, contextually enriched, integrated situation in the elementary classroom
- support the principle that all teachers are teachers of language and that second language learning occurs across all subject areas
- suggest responses and strategies for the common questions posed by elementary teachers about second language learning in a culturally, linguistically and academically diverse classroom.

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ESL EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Our classrooms look very different these days. As an elementary teacher you may find that your classroom is a global village of many cultures and languages. Students with English as a Second Language (ESL) needs are part of almost every school population in Alberta.

ESL students are children whose home language(s) is not English and whose knowledge of English, in the professional opinion of an ESL specialist and classroom teacher, is insufficient to permit them to function successfully in an English-speaking school or society.

When ESL students have completed a number of years of study with ESL support, they may not necessarily have acquired a native-like competency in English. They may have acquired a fairly high level of oral fluency, but their knowledge and understanding of more academic language in the areas of reading and writing may still need work. For example, they can usually handle narrative reading and writing, but comprehending and writing expository text may still be a challenge. Students who have ESL needs often require monitoring by all teaching staff to ensure that they are continuing to experience success.

PAST PRACTICE

When Canadian schools first faced the challenges of educating students with ESL needs, special reception, partial withdrawal or total withdrawal classes were developed to accommodate them. It was believed that once the students had learned English in these special classes, they would no longer be at a disadvantage and could then be full participants in the life of the regular classroom.

Subsequent research has questioned this practice, which has not proven to be a solution to such a complex issue. Segregated classes, which focused only on teaching English, did not consider that many of the ESL students differed in their educational and literacy backgrounds. They also came from different cultures with different approaches to education. Students coming from war-torn countries and who had spent time in refugee camps likely had gaps in their education, if, in fact, they had ever been to school at all. Teaching English as a field of study separate from the school curriculum did not always provide for ongoing conceptual development and continuity in the content areas, thereby falling short of meeting the students' needs.

Such a heterogeneous group of students with diverse needs understandably produced very uneven patterns of English language development and academic achievement. Clearly, a segregated ESL program needed to address more than linguistic goals. The basic oral fluency ESL students were expected to acquire did not prepare them for success in content area subjects where academic language demands are high. Research clearly indicates that while a basic level of oral fluency may be acquired within two years, academic language proficiency may take up to eight years to develop before ESL students can be truly on par with their peers.

CURRENT PRACTICE

When we include ESL students in the classroom right from the start, they are free to hear good models of language from their native English-speaking peers and can continue developing conceptually in all content areas. They learn best in structured, cooperative learning settings where learning is student-centred and where they work with students from varied ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Successful integration depends on a school's degree of effort and ability to ensure that ESL students contribute to the intellectual and social life of the school. The school's manner of communicating with parents/guardians of ESL students is extremely important, to ensure that both parents/guardians and their children become full participants in the education process.

Also crucial to the success of the ESL student is the classroom teacher's positive attitude and understanding of the second language learning process. Both of these factors affect planning, teaching and assessment.

UNDERSTANDING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Whether ESL students come into classrooms in Kindergarten or Grade 6, they already have an established first language for communicating—aside from any exceptional cases. Depending on age and/or background, English may be the second, third, fourth or even fifth language they will learn.

The term second language refers to a language that is learned after the first language is relatively well established. By the age of 5, children have control over most of their first language grammar. Any language they learn subsequent to this will be filtered through their previously learned language(s). In this way, second language

learning is qualitatively different from the first language learning process. Nonetheless, both first and second language learning are developmental processes in which the learner is actively testing hypotheses about the new system being learned.

FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING PRINCIPLES

An overview of first language learning principles, from the program of studies for Elementary Language Learning (1991), and the basic principles of second language learning reveals that the underlying principles of these two processes are very similar.

FIRST LANGUAGE LEARNING PRINCIPLES	SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING PRINCIPLES
• Learning and language growth are interwoven.	• Language and concepts are developed together.
• Meaning is central to language learning.	• Focus is on meaning versus form.
• Language learning builds on what learners already know about and can do with language.	• Second language learning builds on previous knowledge and experience.
• Language is learned from demonstrations of language in use.	• Students learn more effectively when they use language for a purpose.
• Language learning is enhanced through interaction.	• Language is learned through social interaction.
• Language is learned in supportive environments.	• A supportive environment is key to learning a second language.
• In and of itself, language can be a source of satisfaction and delight.	• In and of itself, language can be a source of satisfaction and delight.
	• Language must be adjusted so the student can understand what is being communicated.
	• Language skills develop gradually.

While many of these principles parallel one another, there are differences in terms of implications for the ESL student. As the elementary classroom teacher is a teacher of language to all students, an understanding of the second language learning principles and their implications is crucial for informed teaching and assessing of the ESL student.

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING PRINCIPLES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ESL STUDENT

Language and concepts are developed together.

Second language learning cannot be separated from learning experience. Language is best learned in a functional/experiential context, not in isolation as an end in itself.

Second language learning, like first language learning, takes place within and across subject areas, as students use language to think and learn.

Children's cognitive development proceeds similarly across cultures, so ESL children are ready to explore the same concepts that their age group is exploring, barring any clinical–developmental delays.

In language learning, the processes of listening, speaking, reading and writing are interrelated and mutually supportive. The mastery of one is not necessary before encouraging development of the other three. A person's second language, like the first, develops holistically, not linearly in a specific sequence of structures and vocabulary.

Focus is on meaning versus form.

ESL students must be engaged in meaningful learning activities with native English-speaking students in which the students talk with each other, pose questions and solve problems together.

ESL students are highly motivated to seek meaning in their learning experiences, so they can learn to communicate with others to establish relationships.

Second language learning builds on previous knowledge and experience.

ESL students come to the second language learning process with a functional language already in place and previous learning experiences to share.

Successful second language learning is dependent on the continual maintenance of first language literacy, which is achieved when parents/guardians or friends listen to, read and talk about stories in the first language.

ESL students develop second language competence at individual rates, which are influenced by their first language background, their previous literacy and school experiences, and their own abilities.

Students learn more effectively when they use language for a purpose. Language is learned through social interaction.

Becoming communicatively and academically competent involves the practical understanding of the turn-taking and rhetorical conventions of the English language; such understanding is developed through implicit and explicit demonstrations that are provided by the interaction of ESL students with teachers and peers.

Second language students are not expected to keep up with a class reading group, but they need opportunities to read material at their level. Writing activities need to be closely integrated with conversation and reading; those aspects of language both inform and are informed by the student's writing.

Experience with a wide range of literature, varied narrative genres and content area material, helps the ESL student to use language in a variety of contexts.

A supportive environment is key to learning a second language.

Second language learning takes place most effectively in an integrated setting in which ESL students interact with native English speakers on a daily basis.

A structured, cooperative group learning environment, characterized by groups working together with mutual trust and respect, encourages the second language learner to take risks, to explore and to experiment with conversational and academic language.

Independent second language learning is facilitated when second language learners are provided with initial support and ongoing monitoring of their linguistic, academic, cultural, emotional and physical needs. These things provide second language learners with the self-confidence they need for the writing and discussion of their own ideas and opinions.

In and of itself, language can be a source of satisfaction and delight.

The acknowledgement of first languages, in oral and written forms, is important to all ESL students and their classmates.

Enhancing awareness of the richness and diversity of other languages and instilling the value of maintaining a first language is beneficial for all students.

Language must be adjusted so the student can understand what is being communicated.

Second language learners, especially beginners, need language presented in conjunction with such things as visuals, objects, gestures, body movements or facial expressions, in order to facilitate their comprehension of the subject matter.

Modified teacher talk, or comprehensible input, immediately engages ESL students in learning and boosts their self-confidence.

Language skills develop gradually.

Like learning a first language, second language learning takes time. ESL students do not have five years to learn English as they had with their first language. They are older and cognitively more mature, and feel tremendous pressure to acquire new vocabulary, sentence structure, body language and the subtle complexities of the new language and culture as soon as possible. Acquiring everyday, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) may take two years in a totally English-speaking environment. However, in order to experience success in the content area classroom, the learning of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) may take from five to seven years. The length of time for this process will depend on several factors, not the least being the nature of the individual student.

FACTORS INFLUENCING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Factors influencing the rate of learning a second language are:

- age and time of entry into the second language learning environment
- personality and learning style
- attitude and motivation to learn the new language
- possession of a natural talent or ear for learning languages
- language abilities in the first language

- the similarity of the first language to the second language
- previous educational background
- previous exposure to and experience in the second language and the new culture
- physical and emotional health
- adjustment and supportiveness of the family toward the new language and culture
- community interest, resources and parental involvement in school programs
- the perceived respect for and acknowledgement of the home language and culture by the new community
- maintenance of the student's first language in and out of school
- supportive learning environments and skilled teachers who use a wide range of appropriately applied strategies.

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Regardless of how and when ESL students learn to become proficient English speakers, they must all develop the skills required for communicative competence. Students who are communicatively competent can speak English grammatically and appropriately. They know when to speak and when not to, what to talk about with whom, where to talk and in what manner. Such competence implies control over grammar, vocabulary (conversational and academic), turn-taking skills, timing, directness and using one's voice and body language in a culturally and socially acceptable way.

BASIC INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS (BICS) AND COGNITIVE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY (CALP)

Generally, after two years in an integrated Canadian classroom where ESL students are learning in a cooperative environment with their English-speaking peers, they will develop very functional language skills for carrying on everyday, basic conversations. These Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) make them appear to have mastered many aspects of English most competently. They are able to discuss, joke and socialize with classmates. They can often write independently and read narrative stories fairly well.

However, when expected to deal with more demanding content area material, such as reading expository text or writing research reports, their BICS will be insufficient to get them through comfortably. There is a considerable difference between the language required for academic purposes and that required for daily conversation.

Acquiring sound Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) takes about five to eight years for most second language students. In terms of program planning, it is important to realize that at least five to eight years are required for ESL students to reach their grade level, academically, when instructed entirely in English. Children who begin learning English between the ages of 5 to 7 have had less exposure to their first language and less formal schooling, so their rate of acquisition may not be as rapid as for the 8- to 11-year-old students.

These 8- to 11-year-old students have a strong first language background and more developed study skills, so they can learn faster and transfer what they know about first language learning to their learning of English. Older students can benefit from more explicit explanations about how English works, as they are more metalinguistically aware. It is in the areas of academic reading, writing and discussion that ESL students need direct teaching and modelling, as well as a structured, cooperative learning environment, in order to compete on par with their peers.

The more one understands about developing communicative competence in a second language, the more one can effectively plan for, teach and assess ESL students. Knowing what to expect in terms of second language development, alleviates a great deal of uncertainty about how well an ESL student may be progressing.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Regardless of their previous education or language background, all second language learners undergo similar processes when learning a new language.

SILENT PERIOD

When learning a new language, students need to spend a period of time listening and internalizing the new system. Some students prefer to stay silent for a period of anywhere between one to six months before they are ready to speak. During this silent period, it is best to refrain from forcing children to talk or read orally until they indicate readiness. Other students may begin speaking right away, depending on their personality and previous exposure to English.

INTERLANGUAGE

Not unlike a child learning English as a first language, second language learners must experiment with the new structures in English and learn from their mistakes. Their English will

constantly change as they try to approximate native-like proficiency. Grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary errors are a natural part of the second language learner's unique and continually evolving language (interlanguage) and should be recognized as a positive step toward the eventual mastery of English.

INTERFERENCE

Errors that students make in their second language development may often be directly attributed to the influence of the structure and vocabulary of the first language. It is a natural and often useful strategy to use knowledge of the first language system to try to work out patterns in the second language, even though it does not always work. Interference can occur in pronunciation, sentence structure or vocabulary choice; e.g., "I will take a bus." when the intended message is: "I will take a bath." [Japanese has no /th/, so /s/ is substituted.] "That person is sensible." when the intended message is: "That person is sensitive." [The French word for sensitive is sensible.] Interference occurs more often when students try to use more complex second language structures to express more abstract feelings and ideas. It shows that the student is using the strategy of relying on what is already known about constructing structures from the first language. This is a natural and positive aspect of second language learning.

FOSSILIZATION

Some students, depending on their age, first language background and language learning environment, may continue to make errors, often the same errors that have been repeatedly corrected, even when they become fluent speakers of English. Their errors have become so automatic that they have become fossilized. Such errors are not likely to change without persistent and constant retraining. In some cases, errors may continue indefinitely. This is a natural phenomenon of second language development.

CODE SWITCHING

Sometimes students may switch from English to their first language or vice versa in mid-conversation or mid-sentence. This may occur initially in the second language acquisition process or, even more so, later on, depending on what the student is trying to say, to whom and in what situation. This can be common in second language development and should not be interpreted as the student confusing the two languages. In fact, code switching indicates a child's facility with both languages.

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

ROLE OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE

Current research supports the notion that maintenance of the student's first language assists cognitive development and second language learning. When students have already developed concepts in the first language, it becomes easier for them to map this knowledge onto the second language than to learn new concepts in addition to a new language. For example, a student who already understands the concept of economic disparity will have to learn only the English terminology. Conversely, a student who is unfamiliar with the concept, first has to decipher the unfamiliar academic language and then try to understand the concept. Such a complex task often breaks down along the way and results in the student failing to understand. This argument supports the need for first language assistance, whenever possible, through same language peer tutors, bilingual classroom assistants, volunteers, bilingual books and dictionaries.

While it is true that many second language errors can be attributed to the first language, it is not the case that this type of interference slows down the student's progress. In the past, students were discouraged, or even punished, for using their first language in school and were encouraged to use the second language as much as possible, including at home. This practice negated the child's cultural as well as linguistic background and implied that learning could happen only in English. Fortunately, there has been a shift in this thinking, and students are now encouraged to use their first language.

Through promotion of first language use, teachers can enhance second language learning, by:

- ensuring that as much first language support is available as possible in the form of same language buddies, dual language books, bilingual dictionaries
- promoting a positive attitude toward the language of all students in the class, by finding opportunities for a student's first language and cultural experiences to be shared rather than suppressed in the classroom
- making the classroom multilingual. Signs and pictures around the room should reflect cultural and linguistic diversity
- encouraging students to write in their own language at the beginning stages of learning and later on when they wish to write something for which they lack English
- educating colleagues and administrators as to the role of the first language. Try to dispel the notion that minority language children fail because they do not speak enough English

- assuring parents/guardians that their children should continue to speak the first language at home. Some parents/guardians may feel that they best help their children by speaking only English at home, even though they are more comfortable and fluent in their first language. This may result in providing a very limited model of English to the child. Parents/guardians should be encouraged to continue to use their first language at home, by speaking and sharing their first language literature with their children.

ROLE OF CULTURE

- Impact on Communication

Learning a second language involves learning a new culture. By the time a child is 5 years old, the first culture is already deeply rooted. The first culture of ESL students influences their way of communicating and learning in the second language. Some ESL students may avoid direct eye contact when speaking with teachers, because they are responding out of respect, based on the teachings of their culture. Many Asian students and first nation aboriginal students are not comfortable with making direct eye contact.

Not one gesture or body movement universally communicates the same meaning to all cultures. Also, the physical distance between speaker and listener, when conversing, is an important factor in some cultures. Some students may speak very closely to your face while others may back off if they think you are too close, or they may shrink back if you touch them in a friendly or encouraging way.

Learning how to interpret body language, facial expressions, voice tone and volume in a new language culture takes time on the part of the learner and patience and understanding on the part of the teacher. In some cultures, people may smile and laugh when angry or upset. It may take a while before students learn the cultural cues that help them to communicate more effectively and appropriately in the nonverbal domain.

- Impact on Learning Styles

Like all students, ESL students have differing personalities, cognitive abilities and educational and life experiences that influence their learning in general and how they approach learning a second language.

Some students take a systematic or analytic approach to second language learning. They want to know more about how the language works, such as specifics about grammar and spelling. These students may experience a longer silent period, as they wait to make sure that when they speak they will use language that is grammatically correct.

Others are more global or holistic in their orientation, focusing more on the message. These students tend to be outgoing risk-takers who try to communicate right from the start. They do not mind making mistakes.

- Other Learning Impacts

Class discussion and participation may be foreign concepts to some students of other cultures who might consider volunteering answers and information a bold and immodest practice. Many ESL students can be confused by the spontaneous and outspoken behaviours of their peers. They have to adjust to new teaching styles and the turn-taking rules in the classroom. It may take them some time to shift from lecture style to a freer learning environment, from rote–memorization of facts to problem solving, from total dependence on teachers to self-reliance in finding information.

Discovery, trial and error, and a question–answer style of learning can be strange to students who believe the teacher is the sole source of information and who believe the learner must accept, not volunteer. Experience-based instruction with field trips may not be taken too seriously by students and parents/guardians whose views of learning differ from ours. Many parents/guardians of ESL children also expect their children to do a great deal of homework. Good home–school communication is necessary to ensure mutual understanding regarding expectations.

THE ESL STUDENT IN TRANSITION

For some ESL students, the adjustment process and the readiness to learn will take much longer than for others. Regardless of whether ESL students are new to Canada or born in Canada, they experience a myriad of changes that affect the way they learn and adapt to their new culture.

Some of the changes they may experience include:

- language
- climate (housing and clothing)
- traditions and ways of celebrating

- socio-economic status
- social, cultural and personal expectations
- family relationships and roles
- food and recreational activities
- rural and/or urban living conditions
- expected routines, rules and behaviour at school
- learning and instructional styles and types of school programs.

When ESL students experience these changes, they may exhibit a variety of behavioural, physical and emotional responses, which may sometimes be mystifying and frustrating for classroom teachers. In turn, the frustrations of ESL students can affect their academic performance and sense of self. Each ESL student's transition into the new culture and language is as different as each individual's unique life experience.

It is important to remember that the adjustment process to the new culture varies with each child, and it may take weeks, months or years before the ESL student feels reasonably comfortable in our classrooms and our society. Teachers need to consider the various sources of any changes in behaviour, consult with the student and the parents/guardians and monitor the student, intervening whenever possible or appropriate. Sometimes it may be necessary to recommend counselling with a multicultural worker and to involve interpreters in parent/guardian–school communication. All of these efforts will help to create a climate conducive to positive cultural adjustment and learning.

STAGES OF ACCULTURATION●

Anyone who moves to a different area, whether it is within their immediate neighbourhood, town, state or province, or country, experiences to some degree the same four stages as they become adjusted to their new surroundings. There are many names for these stages, but the easiest to remember are the four "Hs": honeymoon, hostility, humour and home.

- **Honeymoon**. This stage takes place when people first arrive. It is characterized by extreme happiness, sometimes even by euphoria. This is especially prevalent with refugees who have finally arrived safely in North America. For them, their new home is truly the land of milk and honey.

● From *The-More-Than-Just-Surviving Handbook: ESL for Every Classroom Teacher*, © Barbara Law and Mary Eckes, 1990. Peguis Publishers Limited, Winnipeg. 1–800–667–9673.

- **Hostility**. After about four to six months, reality sets in. These people know a bit about getting around and have begun learning the ropes, but this new place is not like their home: they can't get the food they are accustomed to; things don't look the same; they miss the life of their home country, the familiar places and faces and ways of doing things. Gradually they begin to feel that they hate North America and want to go back to their home country, no matter how bad things were there. This stage is often characterized by complaining; wanting to be only with others who speak their language; rejecting anything associated with the new culture, such as the food, the people, even the new language; feeling depressed and irritable or even angry; having headaches or feeling tired all the time.

- **Humour**. Gradually, the newcomers work toward resolution of their feelings, and their sense of being torn between the new and the old. They begin to accept their new home. They begin to find friends, discover that there are good things about where they are living, and adjust to their lives by coming to terms with both the old and the new ways of living. This is a long process, fraught with feelings of great anxiety in some, because to many, accepting the new means rejecting the old.

- **Home**. Finally, the newcomers become "native" in the sense that where they live is their home and they accept that they are here to stay. This last stage may be years in coming, and for some will never take place.

Thus, what is happening in students' minds and hearts as a result of the drastic changes in their lives has a direct influence on their ability to cope with life and succeed in school.

PREPARING FOR THE ESL STUDENT

RECEPTION AND ORIENTATION

In Alberta, the procedures to receive ESL students vary from one school district to another. For the majority of jurisdictions, the job of welcoming, orienting, assessing and placing students becomes the collaborative responsibility of many people at the school level.

Ideally, the reception procedures that should be in place include:

- the screening and validation of the student's educational and legal documentation, such as previous report cards, vaccination records, immigration papers. Bilingual personnel may be required to provide translation or interpretation
- the collection of registration information and pertinent background information through bilingual personnel
- the initial assessment and placement of students according to their age, appropriate grade and/or abilities in consultation with an ESL specialist or a teacher with expertise in this area
- an organized procedure for the welcoming and orientation of students and their families.

HELPING NEWCOMERS TO KNOW YOUR SCHOOL

Like any new student, an ESL student will arrive at your school with mixed feelings of excitement, anxiety and fears of the unknown. It is possible that some students from war-torn countries have never gone to school. The foreign language and strange environment may be overwhelming for them.

A warm reception and well-planned orientation of ESL students and their parents/guardians, in the school, are the most important steps to creating a positive learning environment. The initial reception and orientation period at the school serves to familiarize the students and their parents/guardians with the physical layout of the school as well as its policies and procedures.

Members of the community, multicultural and home liaison workers, bilingual students, teachers and members of the Parents' Advisory Council may be resource persons to welcome or orient any new ESL family. If your school does not have access to any multicultural/translation services, try to find people from the community or a larger centre who are willing to share their language expertise. Names of immigrant aid organizations are provided in the Appendix.

Students and their families should be given basic information about the school, which is often in the school handbook. Since translations of the school handbook may not be possible, an ESL student, who knows the school and can explain some things in the new student's first language, is always welcome. In any case, the school handbook should contain easily recognizable symbols, diagrams, maps and information that will be of use to students and parents/guardians.

The use of welcoming posters in a variety of languages; the use of school maps and tours; the assigning of buddies, first language and English speaking; and the use of staff and peer support groups all help to make students and their families welcome.

Active involvement of the parents/guardians at the very beginning helps to build parental understanding and support for the entire educational process later on.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

In order to create a supportive environment for ESL students, teachers need to consider both emotional and academic needs. While we often think of young children as being highly adaptable, ESL students are dealing with many dramatic changes. They must adjust to a new culture, a new educational and social system, a foreign physical environment and, very likely, a different socio-economic status. They may have come with a strong first and second language literacy background or may have experienced educational gaps, due to war or trauma in their respective countries. Many ESL students may have to cope with these issues without family support.

Creating a supportive learning environment starts with a sensitive welcome and orientation, and a classroom organized to promote second language learning. Such a classroom will consider both physical and psychological factors, from different types of desk arrangements to different ways for participating in group work.

An awareness and accommodation of ESL students' language levels, through modified presentations of oral and written material, is also a crucial ingredient for creating a supportive learning environment.

WELCOMING THE NEW STUDENT

Once you have been informed about an ESL student's arrival in your class and the initial assessment has been completed, there are a few things you can do to make the first day an easier transition. Remember that the student may be frightened and overwhelmed in the new environment, where the language and customs are foreign.

- **A positive welcome**. Smiling is a universal language all students understand. Welcome new students in English or in their language, if you have happened to learn their word for welcome. Try to find out the correct pronunciation of the child's name so that the student feels accepted. Make the introduction positive. "This is Phong. He speaks Vietnamese." as opposed to "Phong doesn't speak English."

  Also, "Welcome" signs in the various languages of ESL students should be found in an ESL friendly classroom or school.

- **Buddying**. Pair students to help them learn the daily classroom routines. This works best, of course, if the buddy speaks the new student's language. The new student will need immediate answers to questions, such as: "Where is the washroom?" (Please take me there.) "What is the bell for?" (recess, lunch, fire alarm?) "Where is everyone going?" (to the gymnasium, to music?) "Where can I sit?" "Where are my books?"

- **Allow for settling-in time**. Remember that ESL students need a period of time to watch, listen and absorb the new world around them before becoming active participants. Seat ESL students at the front of the room, where they can better follow your gestures and hear you more clearly. Close proximity also allows you to be more aware of what is happening with the student. Later, when ESL students become comfortable, it will still be important to keep them as close to the action as possible.

- **Provide individual attention**. New ESL students need a little time each day with you, an ESL specialist or resource teacher, an aide, an older student or a volunteer. This helps them to feel that you are concerned and that they are on track.

- **Help develop some language routines**. ESL students can start to feel more comfortable as soon as they have learned a few simple phrases, such as greetings: "My name is . . . . How are you?"

  - In daily lessons, try to use consistent language patterns and cues when you conduct opening routines, such as the current date and weather conditions. Initially, always ask a question in the same manner. For example, "What is the date today?" is much simpler than "Can anyone tell me what today's date is?"

  - Label objects in the classroom that are important to daily routines. Commonly used expressions in the classroom can be written on poster board or chart paper and kept in the same place on the wall or board. Examples of such expressions might be: "May I sharpen my pencil, please?" "May I leave the room, please?" "May I borrow . . . ?"

  - Bilingual dictionaries and dual language books should be made available whenever possible.

- **Use peer tutors**. Select an appropriate tutor for the ESL student—an academically strong, helpful student or an older student who has expressed interest or leadership qualities. As continuity is important, an ESL student should work with no more than two different tutors, and tutoring time should be scheduled at the same time every week.

- **Learn as much as possible about each student's linguistic, educational and cultural background**. It is important to remember that ESL students come to the classroom with varied learning rates and styles, personalities, attitudes, expectations, needs, motivations, abilities, skills, knowledge, literacy backgrounds and life experiences. They are all individuals. There is no typical ESL student. An ESL specialist or resource teacher can provide additional information regarding a student's linguistic and cultural background.

ORGANIZING FOR AN EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM

Whether you have an enrollment of one or fifteen ESL students, organizing the classroom to promote maximum opportunity for interaction is important for all students. It is especially conducive to learning a second language. ESL students learn how to communicate successfully through purposeful interaction with their peers. This purposeful interaction involves exposure to language as communication and involves opportunities to practise language in a wide variety of contexts and in all content areas. A program that integrates language and content teaching is necessary.

The following suggestions are important components for a rich learning environment for all students, with additional benefits for ESL students. These suggestions also support the basic principles of second language learning.

- **Organize for collaboration and interaction**. ESL students need purposeful interaction with native English-speaking peers in order to learn English. This occurs during pair or group work when students work together to solve problems in an experiential, hands-on learning situation. When the learning environment is one in which there are only teacher-directed lessons, ESL students will not be sufficiently involved in an active learning process.

- **Plan for student interest**. Activities must be planned that consider students' interests, learning styles and diverse educational and cultural backgrounds. Students are interested and motivated when they can bring something they already know to new learning experiences.

- **Incorporate previous experience and abilities—linguistic, social, cultural**. ESL children bring diverse linguistic, social and cultural experiences to their learning. Teachers need to facilitate their students' use of these experiences. For example, in a social studies unit on China, Chinese ESL students, who still have very little oral proficiency, can demonstrate and teach classmates Chinese calligraphy or share photographs and artifacts for their contribution to the unit of study.

- **Use key ideas across the curriculum**. Both language and concept development occur simultaneously when teachers use integrated learning activities in the classroom. In this way, language and concepts are continually being introduced and reinforced in a connected way, providing continuity of learning for all students as well as the necessary reiteration for ESL students.

- **Provide for support**. ESL students require some structured support to help them in coping with the language demands of learning in a school context. Just as it is inefficient and ill-advised to teach English separately from the school curriculum, it is equally inefficient to submerge ESL students in a classroom without planned help. The use of teaching assistants, aides or volunteers is crucial. Team planning and collaboration with an ESL specialist or resource teacher is ideal whenever possible.

- **Use visual aids to support language and content development**. Posters and displays of student work will reiterate both the language and concepts studied in class, providing references for ESL students. Use pictures and artifacts that reflect the multicultural nature of the class.

- **Offer a variety of meaningful choices**. Provide students with a variety of forms of collaboration, activities with different purposes and topics appealing to diverse student experiences. Organize a range of familiar and novel experiences in order to use and augment the previous cultural experiences of students. ESL students can learn to communicate successfully across a wide variety of social settings only if they learn language through exposure to and practise of communication in diverse settings.

STRUCTURED COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Structured cooperative learning and lessons that incorporate predictable routines and structures are integral to organizing for a supportive learning environment. While cooperative learning is important for second language learning, it can often be an uncomfortable or even threatening experience for many ESL students.

Group work can be very isolating for some ESL students, especially beginners. They may not be accustomed to expressing personal opinions publicly and may not have the complex language necessary for negotiating a discussion.

Structured cooperative learning, in which the teacher carefully assigns specific instructional and language tasks, ensures that each student must produce and receive language, allowing for equal participation and individual accountability.

The characteristics of a structured, cooperative learning environment are:

- students work together toward a group goal
- cooperation versus competition is emphasized
- ideas and materials are shared
- individual accountability—each member of the group is recognized.

In order for cooperative learning to work optimally for all students, certain organizational criteria need to be considered.

- Groups need to be carefully selected by the teacher so that the ESL student has strong language models and feels supported emotionally and academically. Working with peers who speak the same first language is very important in certain situations, but teachers need to take an active role in rotating group membership so that clustering of ESL students does not occur repeatedly.

- Group work must be very task and role specific so that students understand exactly what is required and who is to carry out each part of the assigned task. There must be an instructional goal and a language assignment. Each ESL student needs to be able to contribute to the group in a specific way, depending on the level of linguistic development. Beginners may need to draw or act out their contribution to the group assignment.

- Teacher modelling and coaching of group skills and processes are extremely important. Instructions need to be presented very carefully, both orally and in writing. Visual and linguistic support must be available in the form of pictures, posters, charts and reference books, along with a prepared set of questions, with language structures and vocabulary, that students may need to guide the individual and the group learning process. With these specific structures in place, individual accountability is facilitated.

- Group tasks should be structured in a way that forces interaction and discussion, with consideration of the linguistic ability of the individual ESL student. Different alternatives to oral participation need to be available.

BENEFITS OF STRUCTURED COOPERATIVE LEARNING

While all students' learning is enriched by group work, there are benefits specific to ESL learners.

- They develop positive interdependence, learning a great deal from the language models and from the interpersonal and group skills of their peer group that allows them to confirm their understanding through observation.

- They can demonstrate knowledge of their culture and their own areas of expertise. Even beginning students can feel secure about contributing to the group at their own level of ability, developing self-confidence in a noncompetitive situation.

- They profit from the natural redundancy that is created by asking and answering questions and by working together to solve problems.

- They hear practical, accurate language, because they are working with native English-speaking peers in a content/problem-solving situation.

- They can hear and speak English in a natural setting with more varied practice opportunities for various communicative functions, such as paraphrasing ideas of others, asking for explanations, summarizing, clarifying, agreeing, disagreeing and interrupting politely.

- They can improve their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) as language and academic content are always presented in context.

- They have the chance to experience success in a setting where different strengths and learning styles are accommodated and where they can readily gain clarification of concepts from their peers.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LESSONS

In a supportive language learning environment, research on characteristics of lessons that work well for ESL students indicates that periods of direct teaching and a recognizable, daily routine are very effective. The characteristics are as follows:

- formal minilessons with a clear objective and recognizable beginnings and endings marked by formulaic cues, such as "Let's begin with . . . " "Let's conclude by . . . " or signals, "What we are going to do now is . . ."
- regularly scheduled events marked by changes in location and props, such as a scheduled time for activity, a scheduled place for activity; e.g., discussion time on the carpet, reading corner, science table
- clear lesson formats across groups, from day to day—scripts or events. Classroom scripts or events are the segments of interaction teachers use to carry out their daily classroom agenda. These events are defined by their grouping (who is to participate), the tasks (what is to be done and learned), their participant structures (how students are to interact), their materials, their physical arrangements and their locale.

Some samples of scripts and events are:

- clear instructions—lesson phases sequenced and clearly marked, written on chart paper, board or transparencies

- clear and fair turn–allocation procedures for students' participation—lots of turns for each student in small groups, peer editing, community of readers
- systematic turn–allocation used at least some of the time (when teacher-directed or when in a reciprocal teaching situation)
- a variety of response types invited or elicited—students may respond through nonverbal means; e.g., art, drama, mime, music, movements.

LISTENING

When ESL students first arrive in the classrooms, they undergo several stages on a continuum of learning how to listen and how to make sense of the "noise" around them.

- They recognize that the new language takes on a musical shape. English intonation patterns, stress and rhythm become familiar; e.g., they can distinguish question patterns from statements.

- They begin to chunk waves of sound into comprehensible units, understanding phrases or routine expressions, such as: "Sit down." "Let's go." They also begin to internalize individual, isolated words.

- They start to hear individual sounds in words and match them with those comparable in their first language.

- They can hold in memory the beginnings of utterances while processing endings—especially those internalized in choral reading or combined with repeated actions. This helps them to understand clauses or sentences that are not routine, such as: "My pencil's broken. Can you lend me yours?"

  They may often guess in order to fill in the gaps in understanding. Success at guessing correctly will depend on background knowledge and nonverbal, visual clues.

- They can understand conversations and lecture presentations and begin to notice the type of register being used by the speaker, such as informal–social, formal–social, academic.

Learning to hear the new language and to gradually acquire a basic level of comprehension may take three to six months, depending on each individual.

During this time, some students may not speak much or at all. They are undergoing a silent period of listening to and internalizing the language and should not be forced to speak until they feel ready. An extended silent period may indicate that the student is experiencing culture shock or psychological withdrawal, or that the student may be shy or frightened.

Even when ESL students are no longer considered to be beginners, listening will continue to be a challenge.

An ESL student may be able to comprehend in one-on-one interactions and converse socially with friends; however, different levels of language on topics for which the student has no background knowledge will continue to be challenging for the ESL student for years to come. Listening comprehension is especially difficult in lecture situations and in class discussions in content areas. For example, the vocabulary specific to meteorites or grizzly bears may be completely unfamiliar to an ESL student. For more information on how to present material comprehensibly to ESL students in the content classroom, see the section Integrating Language and Content Across the Curriculum.

A student's listening comprehension may also be influenced by other factors.

FACTORS AFFECTING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

- The student may be experiencing hunger, headaches, lack of sleep or an emotional disturbance.
- The student may be sitting on the periphery of the group where it is harder to see and hear, so feels disconnected; the student cannot understand peers who speak quickly or those with whom eye contact cannot be made and facial expressions cannot be seen.
- The student may simply be inattentive, daydreaming, unmotivated or uninterested.
- The student may have negative emotional responses toward the topic, story or speaker—or cannot interpret voice tone or volume.
- The student may be experiencing conceptual difficulty with the material or with the organization of the way it is presented.
- There may be distractions from the environment that may not allow the student to focus in an open-classroom setting; e.g., noise or music from other groups, distracting mannerisms of the speaker.
- The student may lack self-confidence, feel inadequate in understanding the English spoken by native English speakers or experience fear of misunderstanding.

- The student may use poor strategies, have memory problems or have inadequate background knowledge for the topic of discussion.
- The student may be facing language overload, feeling overwhelmed by listening to a language that is not completely familiar.
- The teaching level of language may not be comprehensible: the speech rate may be too fast, the length of sentences may be too long, or there may be no visuals to support presentations or discussions.

It may take time to discern which of these factors may be affecting an ESL student's listening comprehension. Each teacher should monitor and assess the individual student's needs to determine an appropriate course of action to improve the student's listening comprehension.

SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

For the most part, teachers can facilitate the listening comprehension process, by providing modified teacher talk or comprehensible input. Comprehensible input is language that is just a little beyond the learner's current level of understanding. It supports the second language learning principle that language must be adjusted, so the student can understand what is being communicated.

Teacher Talk

As a teacher, you should try to modify the way you speak to beginning ESL students but not to the point where you speak unnaturally slow or in fragmented English. Speak as naturally as possible, but avoid complex structures and idioms. Repeat the same sentence patterns when giving instructions or asking questions.

Nonverbal

Use gestures and bodily motions, including pantomimes and facial expressions, to relay intentions.

Act out your material: point, mime, role play, demonstrate actions.

Paraverbal

Employ different vocalizations, vary volume and intonation, be aware of one's manner of delivery with regard to clarity and rate of the message, and pause to allow processing time for the listener.

Allow students wait time to hear, understand and formulate responses.

Discourse

Remember to repeat and recycle new words and structures consistently, frequently rephrasing and paraphrasing, and to frame or draw attention to new information in a systematic manner.

Repeat key words frequently and consciously throughout your lesson, so students can hear them in different contexts. Repetition does not mean asking a child to repeat a word or phrase over and over in a drill-like fashion. It means providing the consistent use of the word or phrase in a meaningful context:

"I like the blue **house**. The **house** is at the end of the street. My friend lives in the **house**. Do you like the blue **house**, too?"

Students may need to hear the same word or phrase in different contexts as many as 200 times before the utterance becomes fully internalized and ready for them to use spontaneously.

Frame what you are going to say: "**Look** here, now. **Let's watch** what I'm going to show you."

Contextual

Use visual aids, such as pictures, photos, charts, advance organizers, webs, maps, teacher sketches and rebus charts to support oral presentations; and make use of real objects for all the five senses.

Remember that optimal language input for the student is thematically related and relevant to individual needs. The more interesting and meaningful the lesson is to the ESL student, the more motivated the student will be to listen.

CHECKING FOR COMPREHENSION

When you have provided ESL students with what you believe to be comprehensible input, you need to determine that this input has actually become intake.

When your students nod in apparent understanding, they are trying to show you that they are paying attention and doing their best to follow along, even if they do not understand everything. Here are some questions you can ask to check for comprehension more directly.

CHECKING FOR COMPREHENSION

Can the ESL student:

• DO what is requested?	Respond physically to a command, such as: "Take out your pencil, please."
• CHOOSE?	Select from alternatives, such as pictures, objects, texts: "Which one is the blue dragon?"
• TRANSFER?	Draw a picture of what is heard.
• ANSWER?	Answer a question directly and correctly.
• CONDENSE?	Outline or take notes from a lesson.
• EXTEND?	Provide an ending to a story heard.
• DUPLICATE?	Rephrase the message, or repeat it verbatim.
• MODEL?	Request a book after listening to a modelled request: "Could I borrow this book, please?"
• CONVERSE?	Engage in conversation, or interact.

Eventually, students internalize the structure of English through daily listening, reading, writing and conversation that is comprehensible and meaningful to them. This can take place only when students are actively engaged with English-speaking classmates and teachers in cooperative learning situations or through play in the gymnasium and on the playground.

SPEAKING

Like the development of listening comprehension, the ESL student's acquisition of oral language progresses gradually on a continuum. During the silent period, a student is most likely internally practising ways to say things. Whether or not a student begins speaking right away may depend on whether the student is shy or a risk-taker, or on previous exposure to English.

Beginning ESL students need to function immediately in their new environment, so they are usually highly motivated to learn to speak. They begin with survival phrases, such as: "Hello." "My name is . . ." "Where's washroom?" "My turn. "

They may use these memorized phrases as communication starters: "Hi, I'm Zara. What's your name?" They learn these expressions as unanalyzed chunks or routines, without any understanding that these contain separate words or are organized

in an order specific to English sentence structure. Beginners may ask memorized questions before they can understand answers or comments.

Eventually, they begin to respond in one-on-one situations with a teacher or a peer, using one or two words, gestures, drawings, or using their routines. Like a child learning a first language, the ESL student's main goal is to communicate a message, not to produce an accurate form. "I wanna let's go library" is an example of combining two unanalyzed chunks that clearly convey the student's wishes but do not follow the rules of English grammar. Students soon begin to build on these chunks or patterns to create more complex sentence structures. Initially, teachers will become aware that students often can understand more than they are able to verbalize.

Because of their strong desire to communicate, ESL students may sometimes break into their own language. They may have an overwhelming need to express themselves, especially if they are excited or frustrated by something. It is also important for them to make their peers understand that they already speak a very complex language very well, even if they cannot speak English so well.

SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Teachers are anxious to ensure that ESL students feel comfortable to participate in one-on-one and group discussions as soon as possible. Some ways to ease students into speaking are as follows:

- Assign buddies who are responsible and can help students become familiar with the classroom and school routines, such as where the washroom, gymnasium and playground are located.
- Involve students in such activities as choral reading, jazz chants, readers' theatre, buddy reading, singing, show and tell, and participation in puppet plays with small repetitive parts.
- Encourage reading of labelled pictures and stories from personal journals, as scaffolds to lead into more talk.
- Provide wait time when asking a question, remembering that responding in a new language requires extra time to formulate the answer linguistically and conceptually.

Asking the Right Questions

Providing modified teacher talk; i.e., comprehensible input, combined with sensitive feedback strategies, is important. Being conscious of how you question ESL students is important to helping them respond.

We question students because we want them to think and formulate responses. ESL students may often know an answer conceptually but cannot readily understand your question or instantly find the words they need for a clear answer. The interactive process of questioning and answering can be greatly facilitated by asking the right questions.

The way in which students learning English are questioned can determine how they will respond, depending on their particular stage of oral language development.

Levels of Questioning

There are four levels of questioning teachers might consider.

- Asking YES/NO questions: the student need respond only with a "yes" or a "no". "Do you want a new book now?"
- Asking EITHER/OR questions: the student need respond only with one word. "What is Bonnie painting?" Answer: "dog." If no answer is forthcoming, provide choices: "a dog or a cat?"
- Asking WHERE/WHAT questions: the student need respond only with one word or a phrase. "Where is Yusuke sitting?" Answer: "Over there."
- Asking questions requiring a content vocabulary answer: the student can respond in complete sentences. "What is Emma reading?" Answer: "She's reading her journal."

Asking students the right questions, based on their level of language, will help promote risk-taking, self-confidence and pride in being able to communicate, thereby enhancing oral language development.

Remember to allow for enough response time. Consider that ESL students have to do two things. They have to conceptualize the answer to the question and then formulate it into English. This complex process requires time.

Providing Positive Corrective Feedback

Teachers need to be aware of when and how to correct an ESL student's spoken English.

In the initial stages of second language learning, try to correct the student only when the meaning is unclear and results in communication breakdown. Do this by modelling the appropriate utterance in a natural way; for example:

Student: "I want to sit in this **house**." (pointing to a spot on the floor)
Teacher: "You want to sit in this **place**?"
Student: "Yes, this **place**."

You may use the following four strategies to ensure that you are providing positive corrective feedback.

- Use confirmation check and clarification requests.

  S: Yesterday, I come late because I see tooth doctor.
  T: You came late yesterday because you saw the dentist.
  OR
  Yesterday, you went to the dentist so you were late.

- Use student rephrasings and expansion.

  S: I go tomorrow for doctor.
  T: Oh, you will go to the doctor tomorrow!

- Give extra chances—pauses, prompts, self-rephrasings, requests for more information (probes).

  S: I can no see the . . . the . . .
  T: . . . the chart board?
  S: No, that thing.
  T: The board? Which one? Show me. (The student gets up and points.)
  T: Oh, the poster! You can't see the poster. Can you see it now?
  S: Yes. Now I see.

- Correct by focusing on the message (its meaning and intelligibility).

  S: I want know more library (heard as "I want no more library").
  T: You don't want to go to the library?
  S: No. I want. I don't know library?
  T: You want to know more about the library?
  S: Yes. Can you help me?

Feedback on Pronunciation

The ESL student can be a fluent speaker, but sometimes communication breaks down because the student has problems mastering the English sound system.

The amount of difficulty or phonetic interference will depend to a large extent on the pronunciation patterns of the child's first language. For example, a child who speaks a first language that has few final consonants will tend to drop word-final consonants in English, resulting in utterances like the following: Jaw an Baw wa to da sto. (John and Bob walked to the store.)

POSSIBLE PHONETIC INTERFERENCES OF FIRST LANGUAGES IN LEARNING ENGLISH

Language	First Language/English Sound	Example	Explanation
Vietnamese	k/kl	cass/class	– these initial consonant clusters do not occur in Vietnamese
	s/sh	sue/shoe	
	-/f	kni/knife	
	-/th	ma/math	– limited number of final consonants in Vietnamese
Mandarin	s/th	sum/thumb	– [th] does not exist in Mandarin
	f/th	baf/bath	
Korean	b/v	biolin/violin	– no labiodental sounds [f/v] in Korean
Japanese	r/l	fry/fly	– [l] does not exist in Japanese
Arabic	b/p	baber/paper	– voiceless stops are voiced in Arabic before vowels
Spanish	b/v	balentine/valentine	– no labiodental [v] in Spanish
Cree	s/sh	sip/ship	– [sh] does not occur in Cree
Serbo-Croatian	t/th	tink/think	– [th] does not occur in Serbo-Croatian
Polish	t/d	bat/bad	– consonants are devoiced in word-final position

Ways to Practise Pronunciation

Flawed pronunciation may cause misunderstanding or even laughter and ridicule from peers. Knowing when, how, and if pronunciation is to be corrected is an extremely sensitive issue. After listening carefully to the ESL student, it is easy to determine which sounds require extra practice.

- Working one-on-one with the ESL student during conferencing is a good way to privately work on isolating some sounds that are causing difficulty. They can be practised within the context of reading words, phrases and sentences in both familiar and new texts.

- Within the context of the classroom, readers' theatre is an excellent way for ESL students to practise pronunciation, because they are not singled out. The choral reading allows for repetition and consistent exposure to English stress and intonation patterns that are equally crucial in conveying an accurate and natural sounding message. Reading along with audiotaped books is another private, unthreatening way to practise at home or at school.

- In structured, cooperative learning situations, ESL students converse with their English-speaking peers. It is through this kind of interaction that ESL students note when their pronunciation causes misunderstanding; and they learn to respond to their peers' feedback cues, acquiring the self-monitoring skills necessary for working out their specific pronunciation problems.

Many ESL students are unnecessarily referred to speech–language pathologists because of problems that are directly attributable to the first language interference described earlier. It is important for teachers to be aware that it takes students time to actually learn to hear new sounds, before they can pronounce them properly and use them in conversation and in learning to spell.

However, if a student stutters or stammers, or has prolonged problems with pronouncing certain sounds, it may be necessary to find out if these problems are also evident in the student's first language.

Listening to the student speaking in his or her first language with a peer; asking the student's parents/guardians; or requesting an assessment in the student's first language, whenever possible, are ways of finding out whether or not the student requires speech–language intervention.

READING

In a literature-based classroom, where textual materials of all kinds, from fictional to informational, are used to promote language learning, reading provides the foundation for enriched language and concept development for all students.

Like their English-speaking peers, ESL students progress at individual rates of development, attaining different levels of success along the way. As teachers, you need to be aware of some of the important factors that can affect learning to read in a new language, because this, in turn, will affect how you plan for ESL students and how you assess them.

FACTORS AFFECTING SECOND LANGUAGE READING

First Language Literacy

You need to consider both the student's age and educational background when assessing reading abilities. Some children may be too young to have learned to read, may not have been to school yet, may have experienced gaps in their schooling or may speak a language that has no written system. They may be preliterate (no reading skills), semiliterate (some formal reading instruction but no mastery of skills) or literate (fluent readers in their first language or additional languages). Students who are literate in their first language will have transferable skills to bring to the second language reading process. Students who are not literate in their first language will need to learn a whole new language and how to read.

Parental and Student Views on Reading

Reading serves various purposes in different cultures. Some cultures believe that the sole purpose of reading at school is for acquiring factual information. Reading for pleasure may not be considered serious study and, as such, parents/guardians and students may believe it should be done at home and not at school.

Student's First Language Writing System

Does the student's first language employ a different system from the alphabet? Does the student read from left to right or in columns from top to bottom?

Background Knowledge

As reading comprehension depends on one's experiential knowledge to bring meaning to the text, it is important to remember that ESL students bring different cultural and social perspectives to their reading of English. These differences affect the meaning they bring to and interpret from the text.

ESL students are constantly expected to process new information regarding the English language and culture and to make associations with knowledge we assume they have. However, they may not have this knowledge, due to cultural differences. For example, the notion of Christmas may differ immensely from one culture to another, or it may exist in another form or not at all.

Particularly for more advanced students, comprehension breakdown may be mistakenly attributed to deficient language processing skills or poor vocabulary, when in fact, it may be the students' inability to relate information from the text to their existing background knowledge.

SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Literature-based Reading Program

A literature-based reading program, in which students are actively engaged in reading and sharing self-selected books, is a more accommodating and enriching environment than is a lock step, basal reading program. ESL students will initially require teacher guidance in selecting materials appropriate for their level of language competence.

Community of readers, readers' workshop and writers' workshop are invaluable ways of organizing maximum student choice about what they will read, write and how they will work cooperatively with peers. However, there is still room for additional structured learning experiences for ESL students, particularly in the area of designing tasks that focus specifically on language and on building background knowledge. ESL students need literacy scaffolds to help them get started.

Literacy Scaffolds

Scaffolding is a technique by which teachers can elaborate and expand upon students' early second language development. By modelling language and story patterns through shared reading and writing with students, teachers provide cues to ESL students that help them to make sense of print.

- Scaffolds make use of language and discourse patterns that repeat themselves and that are, therefore, predictable; e.g., patterned language stories, poetry, chants and rhymes. Scaffolds can also be framed sentences, sample research reports and science laboratory write-ups, depending on the ESL student's level of language development and grade level.

- Scaffolds model generative language patterns and stretch each student's competence. It is important to remember that scaffolds are temporary and that students tend to move on quickly to their own original approaches once the scaffolds have outlived their purpose.

- Scaffolds help ESL students better understand the rhetoric of the English language and, more specifically, how ideas are organized and presented to contribute to the enhanced understanding and communication of ideas. Our concept of a linear sense of story, with a defined beginning, middle and end, differs from the Eastern sense of story, which is more circular in nature.

It should also be kept in mind that English-speaking students have internalized the organizational patterns of English from their years of reading magazines, newspapers, stories and novels, while ESL students have not. The ESL student's first language organizational patterns may be very different from those of English.

Language Experience Approach (LEA)

One scaffolding strategy that capitalizes on the ESL student's background knowledge is the language experience approach. LEA is a meaningful way to start reading and writing with an ESL student of any age. In this approach, students learn to read the language they speak. It is one of the most natural ways of introducing ESL students to reading and writing, as it incorporates the student's language as well as background experience. Kindergarten to Grade 2 teachers can use LEA with the whole class, but beyond these levels, teachers need to organize time for one-on-one or small group instruction of ESL students.

The language experience approach is based on the following ideas:

- what students think about, they can say
- what they say can be written or dictated
- what has been written can be read
- students can read what others have written.

Beginning ESL students will not have sufficient language to tell a story. They may be ready to share ideas, but they will need support in the form of a literacy scaffold. In a one-on-one or small group situation, the teacher must, therefore, encourage the student to:

- draw pictures
- label pictures
- extend words into phrases and simple sentences.

The teacher scribes as the student speaks, focusing primarily on the message and not the form. Initially, try not to correct grammar, vocabulary choice or organization of ideas. If the student says, "My mom like Canada food.", write it this way. Do not, however, transcribe pronunciation errors. In subsequent sessions, students begin to recognize their own errors, and correct them independently or with your guidance. Explaining that "he or she" (3rd person singular) in English requires an "s" at the end of simple present tense verbs (My mom likes Canada food.) can be useful to an older student, but confusing and meaningless to a younger child, especially if introduced too early.

When the student appears ready to be corrected, it is important to limit the focus of correction to one or more points at each stage of the revision process. Generally, verb tenses are corrected first, followed by selecting the most appropriate vocabulary, then refining the use of articles and prepositions, leaving spelling and mechanics to the final stages.

Using LEA, teachers and students can co-author stories; and with this additional support, ESL students can move quickly from dictating stories to writing entirely on their own. Reading back their own work, in their own words, is rewarding and exciting for them. In a group situation, this is particularly exciting, especially when the group has composed the story based on a shared experience.

While many elementary teachers currently use a dictated story approach, the language experience approach presents guidelines that can be followed in order to maximize the second language learning opportunities for ESL students. The modelling of the process of writing and revising is extremely important.

- The teacher may ask questions to guide the process in the early stages.

- The teacher first focuses on the intent of one student's message. Ideas are recorded on the board or chart paper as they are spoken. If the student says, "Yesterday, we go to zoo.", write it this way. Corrections will be made later as a group process.

- As the story is being written, the teacher may choose to make some suggestions, such as: "This is an exciting comment, so I will put an exclamation mark here."

- The teacher then reads the story while pointing to phrases on the board or chart paper.

- All the ESL students read the story together:
  - echoically, repeating after the teacher
  - chorally, with the teacher
  - chorally or independently, without the teacher.

- The teacher asks students for possible changes, carefully guiding the revision process.

- When the story is completely revised, students record it in their journals.

- The group story can be permanently recorded on a language experience chart for future reference and enjoyment.

There are many advantages of using the language experience approach with ESL students. Some of these advantages include the following.

- The student can express what has been experienced, can see the language in written form, can hear the language read by self and others and can read familiar language.

- What is written is familiar to the student. It is meaningful because it is a part of the student's experience and language.

- Group reading is supportive.

- The student can observe the relationships between thought and oral and written language.

- The student focuses on chunks of meaning rather than processing individual letters and sounds.

Role of Phonics

The English sound system and its inconsistent phonetic spellings can be very confusing to ESL students. It is often difficult for them to differentiate sounds in English, especially if those sounds do not exist in their first language. For example, Chinese and Japanese-speaking children find it difficult to distinguish between /r/ and /l/, and Arabic speakers do not distinguish between /p/ and /b/. It takes time for them to hear the difference, so that they can eventually use sounding out as a strategy in their spelling. This is quite a demanding task in the beginning stages of second language acquisition. Refer to the phonetic interferences chart provided earlier.

Attention to phonics should first be done orally, using word families and repetitive patterns, or rhymes and chants, within the context of reading or a lesson. Oral/aural reiteration of the English sound system can be a great help in preparing students to decode these patterns in reading text and to use this knowledge in their spelling and writing.

Focusing on certain words or patterns in a language experience approach story is a good place to start, drawing initially on the student's own language and integrating print activities naturally into language development.

Poetry, rhymes, oral story telling, jazz chants, song lyrics, short plays and readers' theatre all help to link oral language development with a greater facility to use print in reading and writing.

Choosing Materials

Given what is known about the role of background knowledge in the reading process, it is logical that ESL students can better understand and remember text that reflects their cultural backgrounds. Providing multicultural literature choices in the classroom will be an enriching experience for all students and will be especially welcoming and helpful to ESL students.

Sources to draw upon are:

- folktales, maxims, historical tales, fables and translated stories from students' native cultures; e.g., *Cinderella*; *Momotaro, the Peach Boy*; *The Great Big Enormous Turnip*
- books with culturally familiar experiences and character settings, or books about the student's country, climate, geography, past times, health care, recipes, holidays

- dual language books
- individually developed or group-developed books by students, describing life in their native cultures; e.g., *My House in Libya*, with student illustrations and explanations about the culture's food, shelter, clothing, recreation, sports and family and school life.

Directed Reading–Thinking Activity (DRTA)

Once students have moved beyond reading their own stories and moved into choosing their own texts, teachers can help them to predict, to improve comprehension and to retain information through a scaffolding strategy, such as the Directed Reading–Thinking Activity (DRTA).

In a DRTA, three questions are asked:

- What do you think this story is about?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Why do you think so?

Teachers show the students the title of the story and ask students to make predictions. The teacher moves through the story a few sentences at a time, asking the students to make predictions throughout. This is valuable for ESL students who have had little experience making predictions and inferences, and they can incorporate it as a strategy in future reading. In addition, it enables the teacher to assess and build the background knowledge of the students.

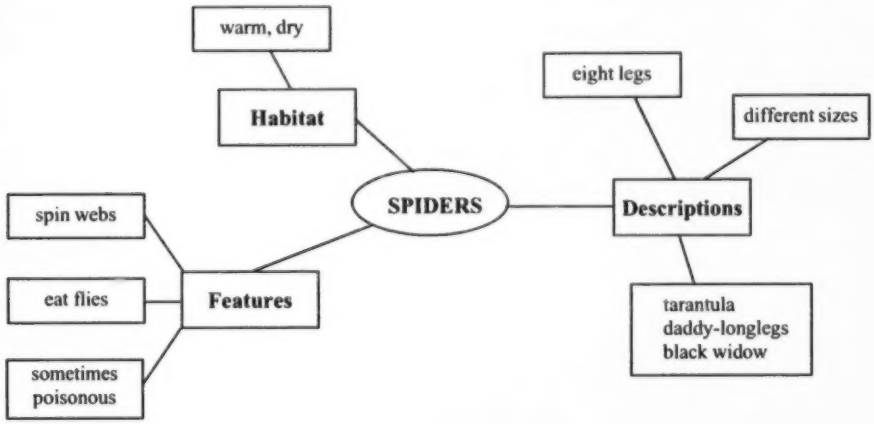
K–W–L

This is a particularly effective and exciting strategy for all students, as they have the opportunity to state what they think they know about a topic, what they want to know about a topic and what they have learned after reading. This may be done in a large group (teacher directed), in small groups, in pairs or individually. Students often remark afterward that they were so surprised at how much they actually knew about a topic. This generates great interest in finding out more information about a topic; for example, finding out more about spiders.

Know	Want to Know	Learned
eight legs	Do all spiders bite?	
sometimes poisonous	How many eggs do they lay?	
scary	What are their webs made of?	
make webs	What is the biggest spider?	
eat flies		
many varieties		

Semantic Mapping

Creating a semantic map or a web as a prereading activity can be used to assess the students' prior knowledge, as well as to provide the *schema* (background) and vocabulary necessary for the reading. The information gleaned from a brainstorming or K–W–L activity can be formed into a semantic map. Small groups of students may work on their own maps. Afterward, students might classify them into categories.



Teaching Core Vocabulary in Advance

Students who are familiar with the core vocabulary that is integral to the text will have a greater chance of understanding the new concepts presented through those words. Students may have difficulty with both content words and noncontent words. For example, a chapter in a science text may contain content words like "mass," "volume" and "density" and noncontent words, such as "submerge," "measure" and "weight." Teachers should identify these key words prior to the lesson and introduce them for the benefit of all class members. No more than 12 new words should be introduced in one session. Teachers may approach this in the following ways.

- Many textbooks highlight the content-specific words in each chapter. Teachers should direct students to rely on these clues and teach them how to use the glossaries.
- Scan the chapter for other essential words that you anticipate will cause some difficulty. Add these to the list of new content-specific words, and give them to any student who may have difficulty, preferably the day before the lesson.
- Ask the students, either individually or in pairs, to define difficult words through contextual clues, pictures or dictionaries (first or second language). Have them write down their explanations or definitions in any way that makes sense to them—words, illustrations or translations.

Using Advance Organizers and Structured Overviews

Prereading strategies that introduce new knowledge required for reading include advance organizers and structured overviews. Advance organizers are a means of organizing the cognitive information into a manageable package for the students. This may be in the form of an outline, key visuals (a structured overview), summary charts, data retrieval charts or a synthesized paragraph that reveals what the upcoming reading is about.

Skimming

It is essential that students learn the value of skimming material quickly. Skimming helps students with ESL needs to overcome the difficulty of reading every word slowly and stopping whenever they meet unknown words. Teachers can direct students to read the first sentence in every paragraph and discuss and predict what the passage will be about. Students can begin with skimming each paragraph and then the entire selection within a given short period of time. Through class discussion, students reconstruct and record what they have read. Then they can read more carefully to check the accuracy of what was recorded.

Scanning

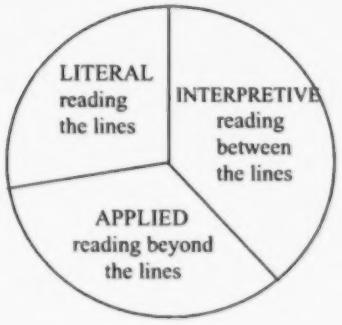
Scanning is a technique that teaches the student to look quickly at a large amount of information contained within a whole book or chapter and to determine what the material will be about.

This is done by asking the student to make predictions about the contents of the material, based on the title of the book or chapter, the table of contents or headings within a chapter, the content of the introductory and summary paragraphs, the words or sentences in special type (italics, boldface) and the visual aids.

Both skimming and scanning are techniques that encourage students to be independent learners. Once they have embraced these strategies, they can be encouraged by teachers to apply them to other subject areas.

Three-level Questioning

Teachers need to be aware of all the types of questioning they use with their students. In order to ensure that students respond to meaning at various levels of abstraction and conceptual difficulty, teachers need to plan for asking questions at all levels—at the literal level, the interpretive level and the applied level.



Encouraging Word Recognition

- Label items (on bulletin boards, on display tables) and label places of activity (reading area, listening centre).
- Write everyday schedules, calendar information and work duties on the board to use as visuals when discussing orally.
- Use LEA activities to describe events in the classroom—record ideas from oral discussions on the board, on chart paper, on strips for pocket charts.
- Post charts of familiar dialogues, stories, poems, chants, songs and prose that have been read by the teacher and students and that expose students to standard English literacy from which structures can be drawn for writing and speaking.
- Display student-made charts or trifolds with key vocabulary from content area subject matter, such as science or social studies.

- Set up a Key Word corner—idea or word books with proper spelling and picture cues, word cards and banks, class-made dictionaries that have English words and pictures for definitions or that have English words and first language definitions or equivalents.

Developing Reading Comprehension

- Build sufficient background information through discussing such things as title, pictures, vocabulary and setting, so that the ESL student can begin to understand the material.
- Try to determine whether or not the student has adequately developed receptive and expressive vocabulary to read the text.
- Encourage prediction before and during reading.
- Teach story structure: setting, problem, action, resolution.
- Ask different kinds of questions after the initial silent reading—questions involving such things as specific details, sequence, inference, main idea, drawing conclusions and vocabulary.
- Help students to become more aware of key words in questions (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How).
- Make sure that comprehension is first developed at the literal level before advancing to interpretive and applied levels.
- Teach the student to recognize transition words that signal such relationships as cause–effect, contrast–comparison and sequential happenings.
- Provide many opportunities for paired reading activities during which time the ESL student can benefit from modelling English-speaking peers.
- Assist and encourage students to form strong visual images about what they read.
- Use cloze exercises from time to time to ensure that students can use contextual information in order to make sense of the text.

- Use informal reading inventories to try to determine what strategies the student is using effectively or ineffectively, in order to plan for intervention.

Using Volunteers and Aides

Parent/guardian volunteers can provide valuable one-on-one reading experiences with ESL children. Talking with beginning readers about wordless picture books helps develop oral language and story concepts in English. Students may want to dictate some words or phrases about a picture book, which the volunteer or aide can scribe, and they can read this back together. Later, the ESL student can read this more confidently with a peer. Make sure volunteers are reading from books jointly recommended by the teacher, ESL specialist or resource teacher, or teacher–librarian. Good stories and poems with clear illustrations are best.

Encouraging Reading at Home

Parents/guardians of ESL children should be encouraged to read with their children in their first language at home. Speaking and reading the first language at home helps students to retain contact with their family and their language group. Developing and maintaining a strong foundation in the first language transfers positively to conceptual and linguistic development in English.

Students are also encouraged to read in English at home, with audiotaped books borrowed from school or the public library. Books can also be read in English to parents/guardians, and the ideas and pictures can be discussed in the first language. Teachers should help students to select appropriate books to take home and share. Also, they should encourage students to bring books to school from their first language and literature.

WRITING

Reading and writing are inextricable processes, especially for the ESL student who feels an urgent need to communicate in the new language no matter what the grade level. Learning to read and write simultaneously helps the student to learn about our writing system and how we organize our ideas for writing.

Studies on second language writing development in children indicate that even children who speak virtually no English can read English print in the environment, such as street signs and internationally recognized corporate logos. Also, ESL learners who are in the early stages of their English language development can write English for various purposes. Classroom research has shown that students will use whatever resources they have available to them at the time to help them with writing.

Teaching writing to ESL students should begin immediately, rather than waiting for oral fluency.

Whether ESL students are beginning to write in English in Grade 1, Grade 3 or Grade 6, it is important to ascertain if they are already literate in their first language. If not, then literacy instruction has to begin with the alphabet and developing the concept of sound–symbol relationships. Acquiring the alphabet is also essential for those students whose first languages employ nonalphabetic systems or for those who read and write from right to left. Students will have to be taught how to form and use Roman letters no matter what their age or grade level. Even some older students may need basic instruction in holding a pen or pencil or in forming upper and lower case letters.

Print should be introduced first, because it reinforces the typefaces found in books. Script can be introduced later or at the same time as print, depending on the individual student. It is important that script writing be taught in the upper grades, so that ESL students can understand the handwritten work of their peers and their teachers.

Writing can begin when the student has only a limited grasp of the oral language. The student can begin by drawing pictures, which can be labelled by the teacher, volunteer or peer.

Labelling then moves on to the writing of simple sentences, which may be initiated by the teacher, based on what is believed the student is trying to communicate. When students can produce their own sentences orally, they initially should be transcribed exactly as they were said by the student, using the language experience approach.

In time, as the English becomes more fluent, a sense of story develops. Students will ultimately produce their own work without any assistance, copying bits from old stories and from books and language in their environment until they are confident enough to write more independently.

Older students may not want to draw, but they can write text for wordless picture books with the help of an aide, a volunteer, a teacher or a peer. They may also want to copy pages from texts they have read or understand to some degree. In the beginning stages of writing development, the message is more important than accurate grammar and spelling.

How and when to correct students' written errors depends on the stage of language development they have reached and the type of writing they are doing.

Initially, all students need to get their intended message down on paper without being overly concerned about mechanics. When the intended meaning is obscured by garbled grammar and incomprehensible spelling, teacher–student conferencing during several rewritings is necessary to help the student communicate more clearly in developing a product that can be a source of pride.

With ESL students it is important to limit the focus of error correction to one or two points at each stage in the revision process. Too much correction will be overwhelming and students will not retain explanations. Once the organization and the intent of the writing is clear, attention can be given to grammar, especially verb tenses, which take a long time to master. Selecting the most appropriate vocabulary may be the next priority, followed by refining the use of articles and prepositions. Spelling errors can be left until the final stages.

Most of the student's explicit learning about grammar and spelling arises from writing–conferencing time. This is also the best time to point out the positive aspects of each student's work.

SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Using Invented Spelling with ESL Students

Many ESL students are quite concerned about spelling everything correctly right from the start. As with English-speaking students, there should be a gradual movement away from invented spellings and toward conventional spellings over a period of one or two years. ESL students have not had the prolonged exposure to English print in the environment as their English-speaking classmates have, so they often feel pressured to catch up with classmates who have already experienced the early developmental stages of spelling.

Asking a beginning ESL student to sound out as a strategy to find the spelling of a word is often very frustrating, because a sound in the student's first language may not have a corresponding sound in English. This renders it impossible for the child to recognize the sound and find the sound–symbol correspondence. It takes time for students to learn to hear the difference, so that they can eventually use sounding out as a spelling strategy.

Nonetheless, ESL students can use invented or temporary spelling approximations quite successfully with some initial support from the teacher and from their peers. Picture–word dictionaries, word banks, labelled classroom objects, rhymes, songs and chants on wall charts, and plenty of reading help ESL students develop an awareness of how our spelling system works, and does not work, and provide them with a jump start to spelling and writing.

It is best to encourage invented spelling after you have done some scribing of students' dictated stories and after you have worked with the children during several writing sessions, so that they understand the process and trust that you really do accept their invented symbols and spelling.

Students may be encouraged to use a straight line (—) or a wiggly line (~~) when there are whole words or parts of words that they cannot spell, or at least encouraged to write one letter for a sound they can hear. They may also want to write the word in their first language or use rebus pictures. If possible, a same language friend or parent/guardian can translate their story.

Teaching Conventional Spelling

Conventional spellings should be provided during editing time. Once oral language fluency and comprehension develop, ESL students become more confident with spelling, and they may want some explicit strategies to help them catch up with their peers.

Encourage and teach them to:

- look for patterns: word families; e.g., look, book, took or common combinations; e.g., -ough, -ight
  structural patterns; e.g., doubling consonants before adding such endings as -ed, -ing
- use resources: dictionaries; thesauri; room resources, such as charts, theme words, stories in their journals, personal word lists
- consider context: for example, with such homonyms as they're, their, there.

If you use weekly spelling quizzes in the classroom, spelling words can be pulled from:

- words that students are using in their daily writing
- content words that are being used in all subject areas in their themes, units, topics
- function and signal words; e.g., unfortunately, because, although, however
- students' personal lists of spelling words, including words that are especially difficult for them to hear
- a teacher-written passage that includes many examples of a specific spelling pattern or rule.

Providing Encouragement and Support

An ESL student's perception of what writing is for, may not necessarily concur with ours. In certain cultures, writing in school is merely a vehicle for responding to questions or for delivering information. Creative writing is not encouraged in cultures where the only expert is the teacher.

Some ESL students may not feel confident enough about the creative aspect of writing or the breadth of language they perceive the writing to require. Initially, they may need very specific guidelines or patterns to follow. Teachers should provide literacy scaffolds—models for writing—that provide a format for beginning ESL writers to follow.

Writing initiators include:

- retelling a story that students have read in class or a story, such as a folktale or fable, from their own culture's literature. This, in itself, requires a fair amount of creativity and manipulation of complex linguistic structures
- writing sequels to books or chapters, or rewriting conclusions differently
- co-authoring a joint story with another ESL student or a willing English-speaking peer(s)
- writing letters to a friend or relative in the home country, or to a pen pal in another class or school who speaks the same language
- using cloze type paragraphs or stories based on a book they have already read, so they can fill in some of the familiar patterns.

Using Scaffolds for Expository Writing

Initially, simply copying some portions of expository text from topical resource books or encyclopedia articles is a valuable scaffolding strategy for ESL students. They need to follow models of this kind of text structure, so they learn this specialized kind of language and the organizational patterns of presenting information in a logical manner. This is a temporary strategy only.

In order to maximize the learning opportunity, try going over their copied report with them, asking them to paraphrase orally what they have written or learned. For strategies on how to help students write in the content area, see the section Integrating Language and Content across the Curriculum.

Encouraging Students to Write in Their First Language

Providing ESL students are literate in their first language, encouraging them to write in their own language allows them to demonstrate some of what they know in a language they can control. This demonstration of competence to their peers is very important to the development of self-confidence, which may positively affect their willingness to risk writing in English.

If ESL student work can be translated, this promotes their voice and validates their first language and culture. Enhancing awareness of the richness and diversity of other languages, and instilling the value of maintaining first languages, is beneficial to all students.

It is important to understand, however, that first language writing will not automatically lead into second language writing. Students may want to write in their first language for a period of time or not at all. They may choose to substitute a word here and there when stuck for a word in English. They may also drop first language writing one day and start writing completely in English.

Encouraging Students to Express Their Opinions

In Western culture, we view confidence in the ability to express our ideas or viewpoints as essential to the development of communication skills and critical thinking. In many educational systems, a student's opinion is not valued, as it is assumed that only the teacher can hold opinions and impart truths. The student must remain silent until maturity and wisdom are acquired. ESL students quite often feel they do not know enough to be allowed to express an opinion. It may take them some time and assurance to feel comfortable that their ideas will be accepted.

Encouraging students to write their opinions in their personal response journals is a good place to start. They can share their thoughts comfortably with a buddy or in a small group, in preparation for volunteering to share in open group discussions or authors' circle. They may also require modelling and practice using the language of expressing opinions, as this is not as easy as it may appear. Teachers may need to provide a list of response journal openers, such as: "I liked the part where . . ." "I think that . . ." "I still wonder why . . ." Such expressions are also naturally modelled when teachers respond to student writing.

Peer Editing with ESL Students

The degree to which ESL students can participate in peer editing depends to a certain extent on their level of language proficiency. Beginners are obviously focusing on trying to write anything at all, usually with the support of a teacher or peer. Instead of editing, they could read a language experience approach story they have written with another student, volunteer or teaching assistant, thereby receiving valuable input and feedback for future writing experiences.

Intermediate ESL students can benefit from following the examples of English-speaking students and learning the group process. Peers in the group need to be sensitized to the needs of the ESL students, helping them to clarify ideas rather than focusing on grammar and spelling. Teacher modelling of how to peer edit is crucial here. Initially, students may need practice following a prescribed format. Students grow as independent learners when they reflect on and evaluate their learning experience and when they respond to the writing of their peers by pointing out what they like about the content and the language used.

USING PARAPROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS

The assistance of teacher aides, volunteers, parents/guardians and other students can often make a significant difference in how quickly and efficiently ESL students learn the language. The extra time and effort devoted to activities specific to language learning can help students in a variety of ways. Some of the benefits that can be derived are:

- students will be involved in more and perhaps a greater variety of meaningful language learning activities
- students will have more English-speaking models to whom they can relate

- students will have the opportunity to establish a warm rapport with people who work with them, such as teacher aides, tutors and volunteers; relaxed learners learn faster
- students can receive additional assistance with regular classroom work that has been adapted to meet their needs.

ORGANIZING AND DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

- Determine what needs the program will address.
- Compile a list of possible duties for the volunteer.
- Recruit easily and efficiently, by:
  - sending a newsletter home to parents/guardians
  - recruiting students within the school
  - submitting an advertisement in the volunteer section of the community newspaper and in the local church bulletins
  - contacting teachers in charge of high school work experience programs
  - writing a proposal to the school board for a teacher aide. Such a proposal should outline:
    - why the aide is needed
    - the kinds of help that can be given
    - what time commitments are involved.
- Clearly define the role of the volunteer.
  - Details of the tasks a volunteer may perform should be outlined as clearly and positively as possible. A workshop may be necessary.
  - Ensure that volunteers do not take on inappropriate tasks, such as evaluation or discipline.
- The following administrative functions must be carried out, usually by the principal or one of the administration team, to ensure smooth operation of the volunteer program.
  - Briefing the school staff and seeking their support.
  - Familiarizing volunteers with the school procedures they are expected to follow.
  - Assisting, in conjunction with ESL specialists or resource teachers whenever possible, with the preparation of a list of the kinds of volunteer services needed for ESL students.
  - Ensuring working space for volunteers and a place for resources.

- Promoting team spirit among volunteers, students and staff.
- Ensuring that volunteers feel they are contributing members of the staff.

- If volunteers are to be used effectively, the teacher's role may have to change in several ways.
  - There will be changes in scheduling, responsibilities will be shared, and classroom resources will have to be used more efficiently.
  - There should be sensitivity about making the volunteer feel an important part of the instructional team.
  - Additional planning may be required, particularly at the beginning stages, in order to outline specific tasks and to provide an adequate orientation for the job. Some teachers find it useful to present a miniworkshop on tutoring techniques and on resources specifically useful to ESL students.
  - The teacher needs to be flexible in order to accommodate timetable changes and ongoing changes in individual small group instruction, and needs to deal with any conflicts that may arise.
  - The teacher should provide the volunteer with language appropriate resources, such as books and tapes.
  - The teacher should inform the volunteer of current themes being taught in the classroom, so the volunteer can incorporate them in various activities.
  - Teachers and paraprofessionals need to communicate and may wish to use logbooks to keep track of students' activities and progress.

- The following are types of activities in which paraprofessionals or volunteers could participate, and some materials they could use.
  - Field trips:
    - visit other parts of the school during the orientation stage
    - visit various locations in the immediate community
    - visit locations that are farther away.
  - Reading:
    - read to students
    - read chorally with beginning students
    - listen to students reading.

- Individual/small group work:
  - assist students with assignments
  - review work already covered by the teacher.
- Individual/small group work, using audio-visual equipment:
  - supervise the use of a tape-recorder or computer
  - assist students with recording of oral stories.
- Vocabulary development, using picture cards:
  - in a small group situation, play a flash card game with picture cards. A card is flashed. Children call out the name, the colour, the use or the location of the object on the card. The first person to respond gets that card. As the cards are returned to the deck, students tell something about each of the cards they are holding. Monitor to ensure that each group member has a turn
  - keep a checklist of new words learned by each ESL student
  - specify categories, such as food, clothing and transportation. Give several cards to each student; get them to place the cards in the correct category, under the correct heading. Ask students to name the object and the category; e.g., "A banana is a food."
  - use more specific categories as the student's vocabulary develops; e.g., foods could be categorized as: "Foods I like." "Foods I don't like." "Foods I have never eaten."
- Writing—slide sequence stories and the language experience approach:
  - make slides from classroom activities, wordless picture book stories, field trips or students' artwork
  - have students place the slides in sequence and discuss them
  - ask students to dictate sentences to accompany each slide or have them write their own sentences. Always read aloud with students what has been written
  - use the language experience approach one-on-one or in a group.
- Outdoor games:
  - teach games commonly played in the community
  - have ESL students teach the volunteer or fellow students the traditional games of their countries.
- Crafts:
  - bake cookies and cakes, carve pumpkins and decorate eggs, which students can share, eat, take home, keep
  - teach knitting, weaving and clay or wood crafts
  - have students record the steps in completing a project, with the help of the volunteer or independently
  - have the ESL student teach a craft to the volunteer or to a fellow student; e.g., origami
  - have ESL students make hand puppets to tell personal stories or tales and fables from their home countries.

- Games:
  - adapt the game of "Bingo" to "Lingo" to teach vocabulary; e.g., numbers, foods, colours, shapes, objects
  - play "Concentration" with vocabulary cards made in duplicate. Expand the game by asking students to use a sentence about each picture instead of just the name; e.g., "The cat is black."
  - use the "Story Train" game with small groups. Five chairs are required. The first child is the engineer. The volunteer starts a story, "On my way to the zoo I saw a _____." The first student finishes the sentence, and the second, third and fourth students add a complete sentence. The fifth student repeats the whole story
  - give beginning ESL students pictures of vehicles, foods, clothing and have them complete the following statements: "In my hand I have a _____." **Or**, "Beside my chair I see a _____." (pictures could be placed beside the chair)
  - use appropriate commercially made games to assist ESL students in their language development
  - use the telephone—make cue cards telling the student who to call and the reason for the call. The volunteer answers the call appropriately.

ASSESSING THE ESL STUDENT

Assessment is an ongoing process that provides teachers with information that will assist them in making informed decisions regarding a student's progress and potential.

PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

The purposes of assessing are to:

- determine the most appropriate learning environment, placement and type of support for the ESL student
- provide a profile of the student's aptitudes and future learning potential, based on the student's performances, progress and growth over a long period of time
- inform and guide the planning and development of appropriate instructional objectives, approaches, strategies and activities to address the student's diagnosed needs
- screen and identify students who have special needs within the second language learning situation
- evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional and learning programs designed around the student's needs.

A teacher's challenge is how best to assess ESL students, so that their true abilities and potentials are not compromised in the assessment process.

Assessment builds on the student's strengths and specific educational needs, rather than focusing on only weaknesses and perceived deficits. It is important for teachers to remember that constant focus on the student's weaknesses or inferred deficits, seriously undermines the student's self-esteem, risk-taking abilities and confidence in his or her own learning abilities. Also, all assessment procedures must be considered within the context of the ESL student's cultural background and experiences.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Portfolio assessment is ideal for ESL students because:

- it is a systematic approach for focusing the information from alternative and standardized assessments, in order to make specific instructional decisions
- it shows student growth over time, revealing student interests and student strengths in a variety of learning/social situations
- it helps classroom teachers and ESL specialists or resource teachers to make decisions regarding program placement, extent of student progress and the specific instructional objectives that need to be implemented
- it is a continuous, collaborative and comprehensive assessment, including information from many sources.

The ongoing collection of information for the ESL student portfolio is vital to the consistent monitoring of the student's progress. A portfolio assessment may include a record of classroom observations, records of conferences, samples of student work and norm and criterion referenced tests.

Classroom teachers, in cooperation with ESL specialists or resource teachers, can provide a portfolio assessment that is a tangible record of the student's progress in language and content areas. Information collected in the portfolio can be used for collaborative interpretation by the classroom teacher and the ESL specialist or resource teacher and possibly the student, so that mutual decisions can be made for future planning. The student can see what has been learned and what areas need more work.

After one year of learning English, the student could provide a self-assessment with appropriate questions from the teacher. From this information, learning strategies can be identified and corresponding changes made in instruction.

Whenever possible, the formation of a cooperative partnership between the classroom teacher and an ESL specialist or resource teacher is one of the best ways of monitoring student progress. An ESL specialist or resource teacher can provide the consultative knowledge and support regarding the best strategies, approaches and assessment schemes to use, in order to enhance instruction and learning for ESL students in the classroom.

GENERAL LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF BEGINNER, INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED ESL STUDENTS

The following charts provide a brief overview of the general language characteristics of English as a Second Language learners as they progress from the "survival English" stage to everyday conversational fluency and to cognitive academic language proficiency. The charts provide characteristics for four different areas: Listening and Understanding, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Knowledge of this continuum of language development may be helpful for establishing appropriate expectations for ESL students' learning, for reviewing portfolios of student work and for communicating with others about student achievement and growth. The characteristics in the different levels are meant to serve only as general guidelines. It is important to keep in mind that not all students will progress linearly along this continuum.

The charts were compiled by Christine Laurell and Hetty Roessingh based on their experience with teaching ESL students, their extensive knowledge of ESL research and their review of a variety of documents, including some from other countries such as Australia and New Zealand.

GENERAL LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF BEGINNER, INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED ESL STUDENTS FOR LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING

BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Low Beginner → High Beginner	Low Intermediate → High Intermediate	
The student:	*The student:*	*The student:*
– "listens" by watching actions of the teacher – chunks waves of sound into comprehensible units, understanding basic commands, such as, "Sit down." "Take out your pencil." "Let's go." – understands chunks of familiar repetitive oral language; e.g., greetings – may not appear to retain vocabulary or structures – may become completely lost during group discussions – understands, with repetition and visual and concrete aids, the gist of poems, songs and short stories that contain familiar vocabulary	– follows simple instructions – follows, easily, most routine classroom instructions, but may still rely heavily on visual input – understands a great deal in small group discussions on everyday topics – may begin to take notes in group lessons, but needs to rely on peers for better comprehension in content area lessons in which language is more topic-specific and abstract – retains some information from a large group lesson – listens for details/sequence in order to retell a story – understands tag questions, "Didn't they?" and negative questions, "Don't you want to come?"	– relies more on aural input than on visual input in group lessons – understands most peer group discussions – understands a great deal of a content area film, retains the information, and relates it to own experience to help predict and infer – can better understand jokes, television shows with cultural references, teasing and sarcasm – requires fewer repetitions of complex instructions – discerns prejudice, bias, intent and emotion – comprehends formal, idiomatic and colloquial English on a familiar topic of personal relevance or interest

GENERAL LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF BEGINNER, INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED ESL STUDENTS FOR SPEAKING

BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Low Beginner → High Beginner	Low Intermediate → High Intermediate	
The student:	*The student:*	*The student:*
– may experience a silent period – may respond in the first language or may not respond verbally at all – uses body language to convey a message – may use simple repetitions or memorized functional expressions like, "Hello." "Thank you." – may repeat phrases in a choral-reading/speaking situation – often labels, "This is a _____." – uses visuals and objects to express needs or to describe immediate experiences – asks simple questions to fulfill immediate needs; e.g., "Go washroom?"	– narrates events, using picture cues or a series of linked sentences to show present, past, future time – begins to develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS); employs simple sentence structures and basic vocabulary to communicate on a limited number of everyday topics; describes familiar objects, events – begins to express opinions on concrete topics, using "I like ____." "I think ____." – uses language very literally – uses common phrases and expressions in appropriate situations; gives simple instructions – asks questions for clarification and about homework – may not be able to express ideas clearly in content area discussions – converses one-on-one about a familiar topic – conducts brief interviews with peers and the teacher	– initiates and sustains class discussion – initiates and involves others in conversation – presents/defends own point of view in different situations – is more interactive and productive in group work – functions in a variety of social settings – demonstrates increasing control over grammar; appropriately uses synonyms, descriptive words, idioms, slang and complex sentence structures – speaks confidently and fluently on everyday topics; is still moving toward acquiring the vocabulary and rhetoric needed for discussing content area issues; i.e., acquiring Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

GENERAL LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF BEGINNER, INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED ESL STUDENTS FOR READING

BEGINNER		INTERMEDIATE		ADVANCED
Low Beginner →	High Beginner	Low Intermediate →	High Intermediate	
The student:		*The student:*		*The student:*
– looks at pictures in books and environmental print – may need to learn English print directionality (left to right), depending on first language background – may read dictated labels and phrases from personal writing journal – may "read" along in a group/buddy/shared reading situation – recognizes sound–symbol relationships – recognizes alphabetical order – develops basic sight vocabulary of everyday words in the environment – rereads a story constructed from personal experience (language experience approach)		– reads short passages of new material for which the student has background knowledge – may read and understand storybooks/short novels slightly below or at grade level – integrates all cueing systems (pictures, syntax, phonetics) with reasonable success – has difficulty comprehending content area material (textbooks, resource books, magazines, encyclopedias); comprehension may be very limited due to the specificity and abstract nature of academic language – uses context clues to predict meaning – reads a cloze paragraph successfully – uses a dictionary to determine exact meanings – identifies the main idea, key vocabulary – uses word analysis skills to gain meaning		– may read stories and novels at grade level – may exhibit less facility with and comprehension of expository text – reads beyond the print—makes inferences, reaches conclusions, detects bias – reads for enjoyment, independently – reads for information – shifts from narrative to expository prose – shifts from learning to read, to reading to learn

GENERAL LANGUAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF BEGINNER, INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED ESL STUDENTS FOR WRITING

BEGINNER		INTERMEDIATE		ADVANCED
Low Beginner →	High Beginner	Low Intermediate →	High Intermediate	

The student:

- observes subject–verb agreement
- uses simple present, present continuous, simple past, future and "will" of common verbs

- may draw pictures of self, family, friends (labelled in first language when able or with one-word English labels, which the student may copy from the teacher's model)
- may write from right to left, depending on first language background
- may copy words from charts, books or a friend's journal
- participates in guided and group writing
- makes lists

- writes a simple narrative composition, such as a personal letter
- may use a combination of invented and conventional spellings
- develops strategies for accurate spelling of unpredictable words
- begins to exert more control over aspects of grammar, such as verb tense and increasingly complex sentence structures
- may rely heavily on copying to write research reports

- gains more control over different types of writing for a variety of purposes
- requires guidance, modelling and intervention with academic report writing
- starts to develop a sense of personal style
- approximates native-like command in some areas of grammar, such as verb tense; complex syntactic structures still need polishing

- writes complete sentences—affirmative and negative statements
- writes most question forms

INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

For ESL students, especially those entering at the upper elementary grades, the challenge is to try to learn content area material before they are functionally fluent in English. Content instruction must begin before the student appears ready. Research indicates that simultaneously learning content and the language needed to understand that content is more effective than trying to learn language separately, and then trying to learn content.

The challenge for all teachers with ESL students in their classrooms is planning learning experiences in social studies, science and mathematics that meet the academic needs of all students, without compromising content.

Even ESL students who have strong basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) continue to be challenged by the academic language of the content areas, because they have not yet developed the level of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) that their native English-speaking peers have. Therefore, they cannot perform equally well in academically demanding activities.

LANGUAGE AND CONTENT ACTIVITIES FRAMEWORK

The table, which follows, outlines a classification of language and content activities framework for understanding the different demands of nonacademic and academic activities. The chart illustrates how language becomes increasingly complex depending upon how cognitively demanding the activity is and whether it is context-embedded (playing games, talking to someone face-to-face, watching a demonstration) or context-reduced (talking on the telephone, reading directions for a science experiment, taking standardized tests).

CLASSIFICATION OF LANGUAGE AND CONTENT ACTIVITIES WITHIN CUMMINS'S (1982) FRAMEWORK ●

	Nonacademic or Cognitively Undemanding Activities	Academic and Cognitively Demanding Activities
Context Embedded	I	III
	Developing survival vocabulary Following demonstrated directions Playing simple games Participating in art, music, physical education, and some vocational education classes Engaging in face-to-face interactions Practicing oral language exercises and communicative language functions Answering lower level questions	Developing academic vocabulary Understanding academic presentations accompanied by visuals, demonstrations of a process, etc. Participating in hands-on science activities Making models, maps, charts, and graphs in social studies Solving math computation problems Solving math word problems assisted by manipulatives and/or illustrations Participating in academic discussions Making brief oral presentations Using higher level comprehension skills in listening to oral texts Understanding written texts through discussion, illustrations, and visuals Writing simple science and social studies reports with format provided Answering higher level questions
Context Reduced	II	IV
	Engaging in predictable telephone conversations Developing initial reading skills: decoding and literal comprehension Reading and writing for personal purposes: notes, lists, recipes, etc. Reading and writing for operational purposes: directions, forms, licenses, etc. Writing answers to lower level questions	Understanding academic presentations without visuals or demonstrations Making formal oral presentations Using higher level reading comprehension skills: inferential and critical reading Reading for information in content subjects Writing compositions, essays, and research reports in content subjects Solving math word problems without illustrations Writing answers to higher level questions Taking standardized achievement tests

● A. U. Chamot and J. M. O'Malley, "The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach: A Bridge to the Mainstream," in *TESOL Quarterly*, Volume 21 Number 2, June 1987, Figure 2, p. 238. © Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1996/CANCOPY.

Activities in the first and second quadrants are typical of beginning to intermediate level ESL students. In the third quadrant, the content is academically demanding but manageable, because the activities are still context-embedded with visual aids and hands-on experiences. The fourth quadrant presents the greatest challenge to all students, but particularly to ESL students, because the activities are both cognitively demanding and context-reduced.

Teachers can help students be successful by providing opportunities for them to develop content and language through a variety of activities and modalities, before expecting them to operate in the fourth quadrant. The challenge is to find ways of making cognitively demanding material accessible to both first and second language students in all four quadrants.

The successful integration of ESL students into the content area classroom relies on the teacher's willingness to incorporate language objectives into content area lessons.

The key objective of language through content teaching is to help students comprehend and express knowledge across a variety of topics, tasks and situations. The goal for ESL students is to gain academic knowledge and cognitive academic language proficiency simultaneously. The goal for teachers is to integrate explicit language instruction in their content lessons.

LANGUAGE THROUGH CONTENT APPROACH

- Focus on Content

  The focus of the language through content approach is on content, not language. However, language must be the instructional objective used for talking about the content. In the content classroom, teachers make a conscious effort to include language objectives in their plans.

- Recognition of the Role of Background Knowledge

  Students bring varying background knowledge to their studies that may enhance or limit their ability to comprehend the content. Teachers should ensure that the ESL student's background knowledge is built into the unit of study and linked with new experience.

- Use of Comprehensible Input

  Teachers need to be aware of the language levels of their students in order to use strategies that ensure vocabulary and content material is accessible and understandable to ESL students. Extensive use of visuals helps to link language and content by lowering the language barrier.

- Incorporation of Learning Strategies

  Teaching learning strategies helps students learn conscious processes and techniques that facilitate the comprehension, acquisition and retention of new skills and concepts. When students are taught specific strategies to access content materials, they can become independent learners. Learning strategies include cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

- Incorporation of Thinking Skills

  As students study specific content, they have opportunities to use numerous thinking skills, such as observing, labelling, following directions, making decisions, classifying, explaining, predicting and evaluating. ESL students may require explicit instruction, modelling and practice using thinking skills, as they may be from educational backgrounds where rote learning is common.

- Problem-solving Skills

  Content classes need to emphasize a problem-solving approach rather than a solution-oriented approach. Students learn to question, analyze and find solutions to problems, rather than being told how to fix them. This is particularly important for ESL students who may come from cultural backgrounds where problem-solving approaches are not emphasized.

- Reading and Writing to Learn

  Specific skills need to be taught to students so they can read the expository texts they encounter in the content classroom. They need to be able to use language for academic purposes.

- Use of a Theoretical Framework

  The use of a theoretical framework ensures that a range of thinking skills and requisite language structures are incorporated into thematic content lessons for all students.

KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK

There are many approaches to planning for the integration of language and content. This section introduces only the basic tenets of one such approach.

A theoretical framework developed by Mohan (1986) provides one example of a system that teachers can use for integrating language and content. This approach, known as the knowledge framework, is currently being implemented by various school districts in Canada at elementary, junior high and senior high levels.

The knowledge framework provides a way to help teachers organize and present the content of any subject area by structuring the information in a way which integrates language and content objectives. The underlying premise is that all textual information can be broken down into one or more of six major knowledge structures:

- classification
- description
- principles
- sequence
- evaluation
- choice.

All topics across the curriculum and across grade levels can be broken down into these knowledge structures. Inherent in each structure is a set of thinking skills.

THE KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK THINKING SKILLS

Classification	Principles	Evaluation
• classifying • categorizing • defining	• explaining • predicting • interpreting data and drawing conclusions • developing generalizations: cause–effect, rules, means–ends, reasons • hypothesizing	• evaluating • judging • criticizing • justifying preferences and personal opinions • recommending
• observing • describing • naming • comparing • contrasting	• relating: time between events • sequencing: spatially, steps in process	• forming personal opinions • making decisions
Description	**Sequence**	**Choice**

Once the knowledge structure of a piece of text is determined, one can cover an entire range of thinking skills from describing and classifying to hypothesizing and evaluating. This ensures that students develop the requisite critical thinking skills outlined in most curricula.

The six knowledge structures and their accompanying thinking skills also help to determine the linguistic structures necessary to speak or write about a given topic.

LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES FOR EACH KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURE ●

Classification	Principles	Evaluation
verbs of class membership: to be verbs of possession: to have possessives: his, her, your, their, my generic nouns: fruit, animals, music specific nouns: apples, bear, jazz nouns of measure: kilogram, litre	cause: is due to, is the result of condition and contrast: if . . . then, unless generalization: in short, for example words of general or inclusive meaning: everything, most scale of amount: all, none, every predicting: must, ought to, should stating probability: is likely, maybe	describing emotions: is satisfactory/ unsatisfactory, like/dislike stating preference: prefer, would rather stating standards: is good/bad, right/wrong stating viewpoint: That is the forestry company's opinion.
Noun phrase + be + noun phrase/adjective Prepositional phrases Relative clauses Adjectives Demonstratives Articles Possessive pronouns Adverbs of comparison	Prepositions and prepositional phrases of time, cause and purpose Clauses of time, condition and reason Sentence time relators: first, next, earlier, later Tenses: reported speech, imperatives	Modals: can, will, may, must, ought, should, would In my opinion . . . I think that . . . I choose . . .
Description	**Sequence**	**Choice**

In the knowledge framework planning chart that follows, a topic of study "All About Spiders" illustrates how the knowledge structures, thinking skills and linguistic structures are connected.

For example, if the basic structure of the text is chronological, the related knowledge structure will be sequence. Students need to be able to understand and control the language of sequence—how to express the time relations between events and describe the steps in a process. The example of sequence in the chart is the "life cycle of the spider." When such a process is described in a textbook, it is often inaccessible to the ESL student, who needs more context and visual cues to decipher the content-specific vocabulary and the often complex sentence constructions of academic prose.

● These language items are suggestive of the kind of language that may emerge. They are not intended to be exclusive or exhaustive.

THE KNOWLEDGE FRAMEWORK WITH LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES—ALL ABOUT SPIDERS

Knowledge Structure	Classification	Principles	Evaluation
Thinking Skills	classify, categorize, define	explain, predict, interpret, generalize, hypothesize	evaluate, judge, criticize, justify, recommend
	• what is a spider? • classify different spiders according to habitat • what does a spider eat? • determine the spider's place in the animal kingdom	• determine what would happen if we exterminated all spiders • understand how an antivenom works • explain how a spider spins a web	• recognize that some people have a fear of spiders, and generate solutions to the problem • recommend that spiders be used as alternatives to insecticides in farmers' fields
Linguistic Structures	specific nouns, generic nouns, verbs of class membership, etc.	condition and contrast: if . . . then, unless; cause: is due to, is the result of; generalization: in short, for example; predicting: must, ought to, should; etc.	describe emotions: like/dislike; state preference: prefer, rather; give viewpoints; etc.
	"A spider belongs to the arachnid family." "The funnel-web spider lives in Australia and prefers wet, damp places, such as drainpipes, while the black widow spider lives in North America and prefers warm, dry places."	"If we exterminated all spiders, then we would be overrun by other insects."	"If someone were afraid of spiders, you could tell them all about the good things spiders do. You could have a guest speaker bring a pet tarantula to class . . ." "Dear Mr. Agriculture Minister, I think you should consider using spiders to get rid of crop-destroying insects."
Thinking Skills	observe, describe, name, compare, contrast	relate, sequence	form personal opinions, make decisions
	• types of spiders • physical characteristics • compare spiders with other insects • compare different types of webs	• the life cycle of the spider • steps in spinning a web • the reproductive cycle of the spider	• express personal opinions about spiders
Linguistic Structures	noun phrase + be + noun phrase/adjective, relative clauses, adjectives, demonstratives, articles, adverbs of comparison, etc.	prepositions and prepositional phrases of time, cause and purpose; clauses of time, condition and reason; verb tenses; etc.	In my opinion . . . I think that . . . I like/don't like . . . I choose . . . Modals: must, should, etc.
	"The tarantula is the biggest spider there is." "The black widow spider has eight legs, a black or brownish body and furry legs."	"Before they emerge from their sacs, spiderlings undergo a molt to shed their first skin and emerge in true spider form. Then they tear the sac and parade into the open . . ."	"I like/dislike spiders because . . ." "I didn't like spiders before; but now I know how useful they are and how harmless, if we leave them alone."
Knowledge Structure	**Description**	**Sequence**	**Choice**

KEY VISUALS

Key visuals provide an alternative, as they provide a visual link between language and content. Key visuals are graphic ways to organize information and to lower the language demands of the text. They can be paired with patterns of organization—the knowledge structures—found in expository text.

The following chart demonstrates how each knowledge structure lends itself to certain types of key visuals.

KEY VISUALS FOR KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES

Classification	Principles	Evaluation
webs trees tables graphs databases	diagrams graphs tables cycles	rating charts grids mark books
tables diagrams pictures plans/drawings maps	tables with numbered steps flow charts cycles timelines action strips	decision trees flow charts
Description	**Sequence**	**Choice**

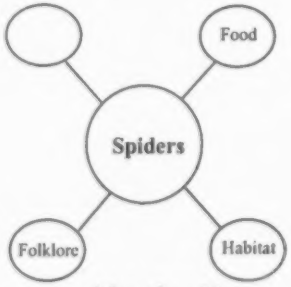
Key visuals come in many forms already familiar to teachers, such as semantic maps, concept webs, flow charts and timelines. Key visuals are different in the way they are used to explicitly develop ideas and the underlying relationships among those ideas. They can represent the actual structure of the concept.

The following table presents appropriate key visuals for the knowledge structures addressed in the All About Spiders unit. Note the Sequence structure box. The flow chart of the spider's life cycle visually represents a cycle. This visual representation will be more easily understood than reading a paragraph about the sequence of events.

The key visual helps the student to understand the concept and reduces the load on the short term memory, while linking the language and the content at the same time. Having the concept held constant visually, the student can focus more on language development, specifically cognitive academic language proficiency.

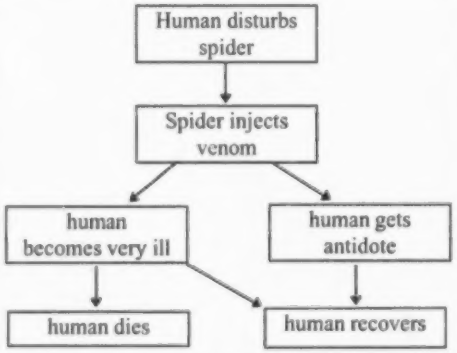
KEY VISUALS—ALL ABOUT SPIDERS

Classification

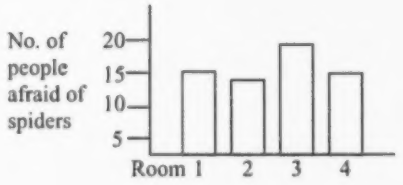


Map of world
with spiders highlighted

Principles



Evaluation



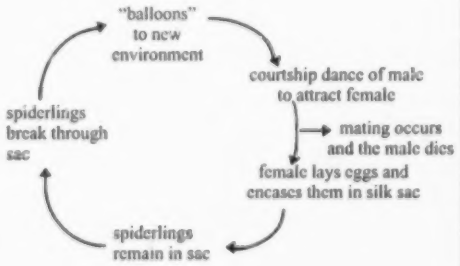
Bar graph (results of
survey of classrooms)

A spider's anatomy

Comparison Chart

Spiders	Insects
• eight legs	• six legs
• 2-part body	• 3-part body
• no wings	• wings
• no antennae	• antennae

Life cycle of the spider


"balloons" to new environment
courtship dance of male to attract female
mating occurs and the male dies
female lays eggs and encases them in silk sac
spiderlings remain in sac
spiderlings break through sac

Class survey results of reasons
why "I like/dislike spiders because . . ."

they're fuzzy	
they make beautiful webs	
they bite	
they're ugly	
they . . .	

Description

Sequence

Choice

Developing and Using Key Visuals

The teacher's job is to determine and develop the best key visual to represent the text. Then, there should be class discussion to prepare the students for reading the text. During the presentation of the key visual, the teacher and students engage in a discussion in which students learn the essential vocabulary in a meaningful context and the language structures needed to discuss the concepts.

The teacher may write student descriptions directly on or beside the key visual, on the board or a chart, highlighting the signal words and providing a scaffold for future reading and writing. For example, the signal words are underscored in the following:

"First, the male dances to attract the female spider.
After the female's eggs have been fertilized, the male dies.
Then, the female lays eggs . . . "

The students are now ready for the reading of the expository text, and they can use the key visual for help. All key visuals developed during the course of a topic of study should be posted in the classroom, so that the concepts and the language structures are always there as a reference for discussion and writing assignments.

The following is a six-step procedure for developing key visuals.

DEVELOPING A KEY VISUAL[1]

1. Survey the text to get the gist of the content and the author's conceptual structure in order to identify the sections into which the text might naturally be divided. A section may be a single paragraph or include several paragraphs or even the whole chapter.

2. Read the first section and identify the key ideas students should grasp by the end of the lesson. Then identify the content vocabulary and discourse structures that will be critical for the students' understanding.

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[1] Reproduced with permission of the copyright holder. All rights reserved. Mary Ashworth, *The First Step on the Longer Path: Becoming an ESL Teacher*. Copyright © 1992 by Pippin Publishing Corporation, 481 University Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2E9.

3. Look again at the key ideas and identify and label the categories of thinking skills inherent in those ideas. You might find it helpful to use the discourse structures (e.g., "if . . ., then" for cause and effect, "first," "second," etc. for sequence) to assist you in this process.

4. Look through the section and pick out aids, such as tables, diagrams or charts, and evaluate them to determine if they are suitable for transforming into key visuals.

5. Work through these steps for each section of the text.

6. When each section of the text has been surveyed and appropriate key visuals developed, incorporate them into a composite key visual. When incorporating the individual key visuals into a cohesive, comprehensive whole, some adjustments may be necessary.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOM

BECOMING A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE TEACHER

In order to create an effective and harmonious learning experience for all children, all teachers need to become culturally sensitive. This does not mean teachers need to become experts on world cultures. Rather, they need to seek out resources in order to gain knowledge and understanding of cultures, so that they are able to share their interest and information with all students to help them become culturally thoughtful. As a culturally sensitive teacher, you can better prepare yourself and your students to appreciate and work productively in culturally diverse situations.

- Use community resources to inform yourself and others.

  Begin by finding out as much as possible about the cultures represented in your classroom and community. Parents/guardians, ESL specialists or resource teachers or consultants, interpreters, multicultural liaison workers, ethnic associations and the public library are all excellent resources. Bring in speakers of varied languages who can share ideas and values from other cultures to broaden student perspectives. The more information you can find out about your ESL students' previous educational backgrounds, the more you will be able to understand their needs and learning styles, which may differ from those in our system. See the Bibliography at the end of this document.

- Find out as much as you can about different cultural behaviours and attitudes.

  Traditionally, in our schools, we have focused on culture through the sharing of ethnic foods, costumes, festivals, special holidays and highlighting the exotic. While this approach may introduce our students to different and interesting aspects of other cultures, it does not necessarily prepare them for the daily reality of interacting multiculturally in cooperative learning groups and on the playground. This means accepting that not every child's lunch box will look the same, that clothing may differ—especially in relation to headdress—or that some children may carry kirpans or wear other religious symbols.

Cultural behaviours and attitudes toward group interaction and play may differ, as might the acceptability of certain forms of physical contact between the sexes. The following section indicates some aspects of different cultural expectations and behaviours of which you need to be aware.

- Depending on the ESL student's culture, you may or may not observe some of the following behaviours:
  - individuals of the same sex may walk holding hands or with their arms around each other
  - students may avoid eye contact with teachers as an indication of respect
  - students may not volunteer answers to questions or participate in discussions unless invited to do so by the teacher
  - students may giggle or smile inappropriately when asked a question
  - students may say that they understand, even when they do not—they would consider it an insult to the teacher to admit that they do not understand
  - adults may interpret parent/guardian–teacher conferences as an indication that the child has done something to disgrace the family
  - adults may have difficulty understanding public or parental involvement in education—the teacher is viewed as the expert. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to tell teachers what they should do
  - many students and their parents/guardians may be used to learning through lectures and memorization, so group projects, library research and independent projects may require careful explanation and justification to students and parents/guardians
  - team teaching or open classrooms may seem disorganized to some students
  - in some cultures, sharing problems outside the family can be seen as a sign of weakness, so the idea of counselling may not be acceptable—the family may be more receptive if the counsellor is perceived as another kind of teacher.

Remember that the cultural behaviours and attitudes mentioned may represent only a small portion of cultures in your ESL student population. While it is important to have as much knowledge as possible about cultural differences, it is crucial not to over-generalize this information. Just as all Canadians are not alike, remember that within each culture there are individuals with diverse family backgrounds, religious practices, values and lifestyles. You may need to rely on community resources to gain greater understanding of the specific cultures in your classroom. See the list of organizations in the Appendix.

CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING

Whether there is one ESL student or twenty in the classroom, a physical environment that reflects respect and appreciation for different cultures is essential for multicultural learning. Teachers and students can work together to ensure that the physical setting is a familiar place for the children and their parents/guardians, reflecting them and their backgrounds as much as possible. In a multicultural classroom, the message will be clear that individual cultures of ESL students are as valued and important as the Canadian culture in which students are immersed. Such a message is vital to the reinforcement of self-esteem and a positive self-concept and can be accomplished in a number of ways.

- Ensure that the classroom is, visually, culturally inclusive. Displays around the room should represent various backgrounds, cultures, religions and lifestyles. Emphasize the everyday rather than the exotic. For example, pictures of a family celebrating Dhwali in a Canadian context or a picture of a mosque with a city skyline in the background could be displayed.

- Welcome signs could be translated into many languages, by the students themselves or by their parents/guardians, and put up around the classroom, inside the entrance to the school and in the main office.

- Bilingual, as well as first language books and dictionaries could be placed in a classroom library as could books written by a wide variety of authors from various cultures.

- Charts showing family trees with countries of origin could be constructed and put on display.

- Lists of English names with corresponding names in other languages could be prepared and mounted on the wall.

- Once the children feel safe and comfortable at school, they should be encouraged to bring artifacts from their home cultures to show their teachers and classmates. If the parents/guardians are willing, figurines, dolls, crafts, items of clothing or other treasures from home could be displayed around the room—provided, of course, that they could be adequately protected against theft or damage.

- Organize classroom seating arrangements to maximize student opportunities to participate in cooperative learning activities.

Becoming a culturally sensitive teacher and creating a supportive learning environment are the first steps to incorporating multiculturalism in everyday teaching practices. Instilling respect for other cultures is something that cannot be done in a week; rather, it is a set of beliefs and practices that pervades everything from policy, philosophy, action plans and hiring practices to curriculum content and classroom practice.

In our classrooms, we can enhance understanding of diverse cultures by helping to create culturally thoughtful students. We begin this process by focusing on developing and reinforcing self-esteem and a positive self-concept in all children.

The following objectives for students can be integrated across the curriculum. Ideally, students should be able to:

- display self-esteem:
  - by being aware of the characteristics of their own individual cultures
- extend this right to self-esteem to others:
  - by comparing their individual cultures to those of others
- identify different cultural groups in their community and in Canada and describe the similarities and differences among these groups:
  - by learning that *different* is not synonymous with *deficient*
- discuss stereotyped thinking and how it leads to prejudice:
  - by applying critical skills to solve such problems in the school and community, and by considering how this process might extend to solving worldwide conflicts of interest.

Achieving the above objectives will require carefully planned teaching experiences and a classroom in which children have a sense of place, work together in a cooperative learning environment and are actively engaged in learning from a culturally inclusive curriculum. Such a curriculum requires that the literature and content taught will reflect a variety of world views from a variety of perspectives, including gender, race and religion.

For example, music and musical instruments from a variety of traditions should be incorporated into a music curriculum, games from various cultures should be part of physical education, and art should reflect a variety of styles from around the world. Literature should encompass a variety of international writers, as well as writers of various Canadian traditions who introduce culturally diverse characters and viewpoints.

Children will be continually involved in discussion groups, projects, group investigations, games, role playing and peer conferences. Carefully structured cooperative learning opportunities need to be provided, so that students use their previous cultural and conceptual experiences in their learning.

The ESL student's first language should be valued in the classroom in order to help the student maintain high self-esteem. Therefore, encouraging students to share their languages with Canadian-born peers is very important. They can demonstrate their writing systems, teach calligraphy and read from first language literature books. Also, teachers and students can share stories and readers' theatre from different cultures.

Continued maintenance of the first language is crucial, for children who have a strong cognitive base in their own language can more easily transfer concepts to the new one. Furthermore, community resources that reflect students' experiences should be used and community participation in either the first or second language encouraged. ESL students should be seen as contributors both inside and outside the classroom.

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BPN 3450–01 Program 1: Understanding English as a Second Language
BPN 3450–02 Program 2: ESL Teaching Strategies for Elementary Students
BPN 3450–03 Program 3: ESL Teaching Strategies for Secondary Students

It is recommended that these videos be used in conjunction with the *Sharing Success Viewer's Guide*. ISBN 1–895350–57–3.

Copies of the *Sharing Success* programs are available, at cost plus handling and postage, to Alberta schools, post-secondary institutions, and other education councils; from:

ACCESS: The Education Station, Media Resource Centre
3720 – 76 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Telephone: 403–440–7729, Fax: 403–440–8899.

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APPENDIX

ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

ALBERTA IMMIGRANT AID ORGANIZATIONS

Calgary

- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- Calgary Immigrant Aid Society
- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
- Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

Edmonton

- Canadian International Immigrant and Refugee Support Association
- Catholic Social Services Immigration and Settlement Services
- Changing Together—A Centre for Immigrant Women
- Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
- Edmonton Mennonite Centre for the Assistance of Newcomers

Grande Prairie

- Peace Area Settlement Services Society for Immigrants

Lethbridge

- Lethbridge Immigrant Settlement Association

Medicine Hat

- Saamis Immigration Services Association

Red Deer

- Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE) Committee
- Catholic Social Services Immigration & Settlement

PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND CONFERENCES

- Alberta Association for Multicultural Education (AAME)
- Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language
- Alberta Association of Immigrant Service Agencies (AAISA)
- Association of B.C. Teachers of English As an Additional Language (B.C. TEAL)
  B.C. Teachers' Federation
- Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
- Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education
- Council for Second Language Programs in Canada
- English as a Second Language Council
  Alberta Teachers' Association
- English Language Arts Council
  Alberta Teachers' Association
- Movement for Canadian Literacy
- Multicultural Education Council
  Alberta Teachers' Association
- Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL) Canada Federation
- The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INSTITUTIONS AND CONFERENCES

- AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc.
- American Forum for Global Education
- Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
- Computer Assisted Language Learning and Instruction Consortium (CALICO)
- Council on International Education Exchange
- ERIC Clearinghouse on Language and Linguistics (ERIC/CLL)
- ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS)
- Institute of International Education
- International Reading Association
- National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE)
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

OTHER HELPFUL ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES

Teachers can contact their local agencies and organizations for more sources of information regarding the education and well-being of their students.

- Local Boards of Education
- School Board Consultants
- College and University Departments of Continuing Education
- Y.W.C.A.
- Y.M.C.A.
- Local City Police
- Local Health Services
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- City Parks and Recreation Departments
- Legal Aid Society of Alberta
- Public Libraries
- Alberta Government
  - Advanced Education and Career Development
  - Department of Labour
  - Department of Culture and Multiculturalism
  - Alberta Education
  - Department of Family and Social Services
  - Department of Health

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

- *Alberta English*
- *ATESL Newsletter*
- *B.C. Teal Newsletter*
- *Canadian Modern Language Review*
- *Cross Currents*
- *Dialogue*
- *English Language Teaching Journal*
- *Forum*
- *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*
- *Language and Society*
- *Language Arts Journals*
- *Language Teaching*
- *Multicultural Education Journal*
- *Multiculturalism*
- *Projection* [Formerly Kaleidoscope Canada]
- *Reading Teacher*
- *Reflections on Canadian Literacy (RCL)*
- *TESL Canada Journal*
- *TESOL Journal, Newsletter and Quarterly*